

# THE JOY OF BIBLE STUDY

BY

REV. HARRINGTON C. LEES, M.A.

VICAR OF CHRIST CHURCH, BECKENHAM

*"Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus Salvatoris."*

ISAIAE xii.

*"You shal draw waters in joy out of the Saviour's  
fountaines."*

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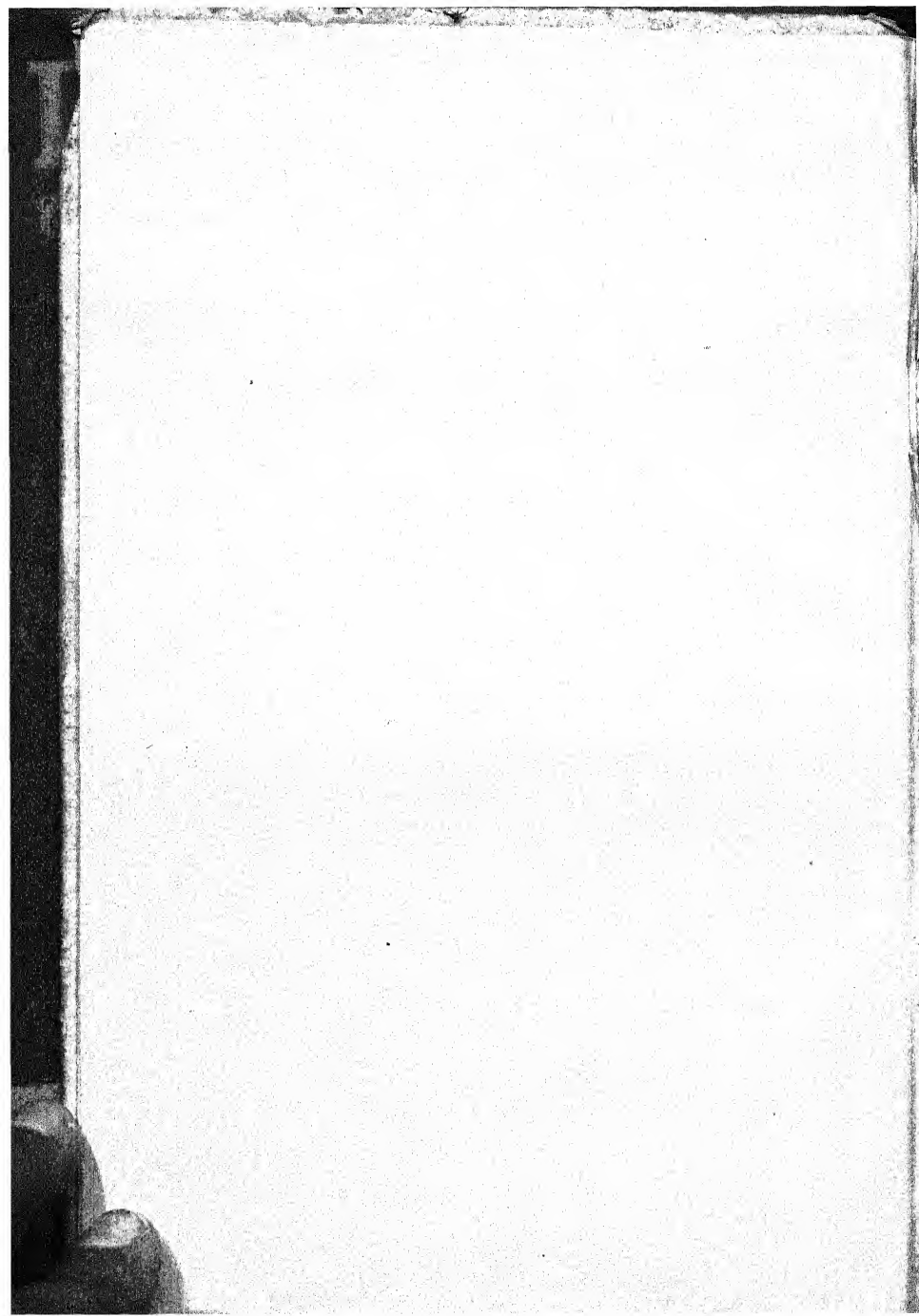
## PREFACE

The suggestions made in this book are given in the hope that they will help teachers so to present the Old Testament and its teaching that pupils may get the real value from their work which they should get, that they may be saved from the bewilderment and difficulties which arise when the Old Testament is presented as though its teaching and that of the New Testament were all on one level, that they may come to a strong faith in a God who is still working in His world, and Who has a purpose which history is gradually unfolding. If presented from the point of view suggested in this book, the Old Testament, far from being the stumbling block that it so often is, can be of the greatest religious value. But that value depends very largely on the way in which young people are introduced to it, and on the point of view they are taught to hold about it. Hence the importance of the methods we use when teaching the Old Testament.

I wish to express my thanks to Rev. E. L. King for giving me permission to use a considerable amount of introductory material from my booklet, 'Understanding the Bible'.

*Kharar,*  
22nd July, 1946.

W. M. RYBURN



## THE WORD OF GOD

The nature of God is such that He desires to reveal Himself to His children whom He has created. He seeks their welfare. He seeks to draw them into fellowship with Himself. Yet He also desires their full and free development. He will not force Himself or knowledge of Himself on them. He seeks rather to draw forth their free response to His love. So His method all through history has been to give man certain powers of mind and spirit, and to give also that which will stimulate man to use those powers. As man develops, more and more light can be given. Thus God has revealed Himself in nature and in history. But this was not enough. If man was to know God in any way as He is, then God must take more direct action to make Himself known. So He revealed Himself through the experience of individual men and women; that is through the history of individual lives as well as through the history of nations and of the world.

We can see the advantages of this method of revelation through history and experience. His people learn to know Him through practical life, through His care and dealings with them. In the same way He was able to reveal Himself through individuals whom we call religious geniuses. These individuals played their part in the history of that strange and wonderful people, the Hebrews, and were indeed, part of the history of that race. In the Bible we have the record of this gradual unfolding of God of Himself, and, in the Bible, those individuals whom God has

inspired have given us their records of what God revealed of Himself to them.

Thus God's method has been, and is, to work through the beings He has created. The culmination of this method was the Incarnation. God speaks to men and women. He enables men and women to carry out His purposes. The more we make ourselves one with God, one with His will and one with His purpose, the more He can use us.

Inspiration has been defined as akin to genius. 'Here is one who, by the grace of God, is uncommonly sensitive to certain aspects of the world about him. He feels more than we do and sees more than we do. He is singularly aware of form and colour and is able to interpret the beauty of the world in works of art. He shows us wonders of which we did not know. He is singularly appreciative of human nature, looks with a new clearness of vision into the souls of men, interprets what they do and mean, and tells us in the language of poetry . . . . These men are different from us. When we try to explain them we say they are men of genius. This does not by any means define them. It only expresses our sense of the mystery of their achievements. When we take this over into the realm of religion, we perceive that here too is genius. Here are men and women who are markedly sensitive to the unseen and the eternal, who see with uncommon plainness the subtle difference between right and wrong, who are aware of God, who are sensitive to His voice. These men are able to hear the voice of God. This sensitiveness and receptiveness, which in art, letters and science is called genius, is, in religion, called inspiration. Men thus inspired wrote the Bible.' \*

But those to whom God speaks, through whom He speaks, whom He uses and through whom He reveals

---

\* "Training of Children in Religion." Hodges; quoted in "Youth and the Bible." Streibert (Macmillan) p. 117.

Himself and His will and purposes, are all free and active beings. They are not, machines like typewriters. They learn the will of God through their experience, through the work they do, through what they see and understand of the experience of others. They use all the powers of mind and spirit and body that God has given them, to carry out what they believe to be the will of God. As they live lives of utter devotion to God and His will, that will is still further revealed to them. Jesus said 'If any man willeth to do His will he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God or whether I speak from myself'. (John 7 : 17) R.V.

But at the same time such men and women, however they may attain to oneness with the will of God, are human. They therefore have their limitations. God never uses men and women as machines. He never overrides their freedom. But He can and does use the person who devotes himself and all his powers to the service of God, in spite of all his imperfections. But these imperfections are not miraculously taken away or held in abeyance. However the voice of God may come to us through men and women, there always remain imperfections of understanding, knowledge, insight, memory, love and experience.

This being so, we have to take into account the human channel through which the word of God comes to us. We nowhere have the direct voice of God. The Christian idea of revelation is not the same as the Muslim idea, of a book being dictated by God. We have all through the Bible the voice of God coming to us through the medium of what God has created; be it nature, history, or men and women. In the Bible we have men and women giving us accounts of their experience of God, and of what God has revealed to them.

This is not to suggest that any person by his own powers can gain a revelation of God. It is God who reveals Himself. The final act comes from God. However great

the religious insight and experience of a person may be, it is finally the gift of God. But man must co-operate with God. God can bestow the gift of knowledge of Himself only on those who are spiritually fit for it, and man has his part to play in making himself spiritually fit.

This then is what we have in the Bible. The Bible is not itself a revelation of God. Nor, as I have said, is it a dictated record of the words of God. It is *an account* of the revelation that has come to various individuals in the course of history, the history of the Jewish nation. It is a book wrought out of man's experience of God through suffering and joy, through prayer and work, through contemplation and action, through insight into the way in which the hand of God has worked in history, and in all the concerns of man. It is a book therefore which appeals to man's highest, and meets his deepest needs. This is the proof of its inspiration. The Word of God is an incarnation. It comes through man from God to man. If we try to make it an automatic and artificial result of some heavenly dictation, opposed as such an idea is to all God's ways of dealing with us, the Bible loses a great deal of its appeal and significance.

The accounts and writings we have in the Bible are from those who felt them to be the message of God to them. The history we have is history written, sometimes by eyewitnesses and participators, and in all cases by those who felt the working of the hand of God in history, and interpreted their history accordingly. But in all the writings we have, even in the reports of the sayings and of the life of Jesus, we have to take into account the human element in the writers and reporters. Even though human beings are *guided* by the Holy Spirit, God never takes from them their freedom, and therefore their capacity to err.

If we realize these facts about the Bible many of the difficulties that meet us when we make a careful study of it, disappear. The Bible becomes then a book wrought by

the hand of God out of human experience of Him, and out of the insight of Himself that He has given them. We see how prophets such as Hosea and some of the writers of the Psalms learned of God through their own bitter experience, and how they were able through that experience to find a message from God for their day, and for this. This message is a vital one, learned at first-hand, and based on the only sure foundation a message can have: experience. It had a validity for them because they had lived with God, and therefore it has validity for us also. We recognize as true what these men are saying because it has the ring of first-hand knowledge, and awakens an answering response in us.

I have read an illustration which makes clear what I am trying to bring out. A small boy asked his father why it was he could not hear God speaking to him as Samuel was supposed to have heard Him. The father was wondering how to help his boy to understand, and was looking at him affectionately. The boy quickly ran across to his father and climbed up on to his lap. 'Why did you come to me, my son?' asked the father. 'I did not call you.' The boy answered 'I just knew you wanted me to come.' Then the father explained to his boy that just as he knew his earthly father's thoughts without hearing his voice, because father and son loved each other, so, when we love God, we have some idea of His thoughts and wishes, even though we hear no actual voice. There is no need for words.

It is this first-hand knowledge of God that is the keynote of the whole Bible. We have its culmination in the certainty and authority of the teaching and life of Jesus, which He had because of His experience of God. But the Bible has one purpose, and that is a religious one. It opens with, 'In the beginning God', and that is the note which runs through the whole book. It is not a scientific history, nor a treatise on science. We mistake the whole

object of the writers if we expect to find, for example, an historically accurate account of how the world came into existence. The writers of Genesis, in common with all the other writers of the Bible, had one supreme object and that was a religious one. The men who wrote it had only the knowledge of their times. They wrote according to the historical standards of their times which are quite different from modern ones. But the fact that they clothed their message in the rather inadequate historical and scientific knowledge of their times detracts in no whit from the religious value of what they wrote.

The Bible then is an account of how God revealed Himself to His servants, of how they interpreted their experience, and, particularly in the Old Testament, of the religious interpretation they gave to history. In the Bible we have the writings of men who were not all of the same standard of consecration and insight. All had limits to their understanding of divine things and the limits of some were more rigid than those of others. But all saw only in part and could express only part of what they saw. Hence we find that all parts of the Bible are not of the same religious value. This is a commonplace of the religious experience of all of us. We find too that there is progress and development in the ideas and in the knowledge of God that the writers show.

Those who experienced God in the early days of Hebrew history did not understand Him as did the prophets in the later history of Israel. Those prophets did not understand God as did the apostles to whom Jesus had revealed God in His fulness. In the Bible we have an account of how the people of Israel, or at least some of them, gradually learnt to know God better and to understand His will better until that understanding reaches its culmination in Jesus and the revelation of God which He gave. We cannot expect to find the same truth about God in the beginning of the Old Testament as we find in the New Testament, though we

will find the same pre-occupation with the things of God. This does not mean to say that there was any change in God. But there was a gradual change in the understanding of those who were seeking to know Him.

But when we speak of progress or development, we have something by which we measure what is going on. This standard is the teaching and life of Jesus. By this we judge the ideas of all parts of the Bible. This is the peak to which all things should lead, and if they do not lead here, they need not concern us. But it is by what we have been given of the teaching and life of Jesus, and by the interpretation of these which God has given to us by His spirit, that we judge the value of what we find in the Bible. The Old Testament is to be evaluated by Christ. Where we find interpretations of God and His will that are contrary to what Jesus taught, then we know that the writer in question was seeing through a glass darkly.

But the fact that there are things in the Bible which do not square with the teaching of Jesus and with the spirit of Christ, does not cast any reflection on the truth of the Bible, if we remember how God works and what the Bible really is. It simply means that some human channels, being imperfect, turned the message of God in wrong directions, or were not deep enough to take it in its fulness; that, earnest seekers after truth though they were, they did not fully understand God's will. We must never forget the tremendous advantage we have now, through possession of the light God has given us through His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ.

'On any theory, the Bible contains not only the word of God but also the words of men. It is full of human thoughts and longings and aspirations. It expresses all the yearnings and surmisings and questionings of the soul. Its humanity binds it to the hearts of men. It contains also the word of God. By whatever process it came to be, by whomever it was written, it is full of God. It contains

no definition of Him, no metaphysics, little theological theory, but He is present throughout. In its pages we hear Him speak to other ages messages which still speak home to us of later generations, pointing out the way to Himself, encouraging us to enter upon that Way, and guiding us along it. In Old and New Testaments alike, God is speaking. In the Old Testament, He spoke through prophets, men liable to error and sin, speaking through them as much as they could receive, yet speaking only in part. In the New Testament He speaks again, but now with a clearer voice, no longer in broken and scattered words, but in the words and deeds of His Son, the full and perfect revelation. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." That is the conclusion of the whole matter.\*

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\*"The Meaning of the Old Testament" by Hugh Martin (S.C.M.), pp. 31-32.

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## HOW WE GOT THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew Bible was divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The order of the books in the Jewish Bible is not the same as the order of the books in the English and Urdu Bible.

The first section, the Law, is composed of the first five books of our Bible, often known as the Pentateuch. The earliest reference to any of these books being thought of as in any way special or 'sacred' is found in the account of King Josiah's reformation, which we have in 2 Kings, chapters 22 and 23. This was about 621 B.C., a hundred years after the northern kingdom had been destroyed.

There is good reason to believe that the book of the Law which was discovered at this time was the main part of what we have now as the book of Deuteronomy. It was probably compiled by a writer living in the time of King Hezekiah, though we cannot be at all certain of this. Nor have we any information as to how much of the other four books of the Law was then in existence. The ancient law which we have in Exodus, chapters 20-23, probably goes back to the time of Moses. This is the kernel of the legislation ascribed to him. The rest of these books was written at different times.

The next stage in the growth of the canon, that is the recognized 'library' of sacred books, is found in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (457-444 B.C.), after the return of the Jews from captivity. In Nehemiah, chapters 8-10, we have an account of the reading to the people of 'the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to

Israel'. This book was substantially what we now call the Pentateuch. We know this as the Samaritans, who separated from the Jews soon after this time, never had any other Bible than these five books. The Pentateuch has therefore been canonical since the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It has always been regarded by the Jews as the most sacred part of their Bible.

The second section, the Prophets, includes the historical books from Joshua to 2 Kings, as well as the books of the Prophets (except Daniel and Lamentations). The twelve smaller books, from Hosea to Malachi, were reckoned as one book because they were copied on to a single parchment roll. These books must have been added to the canon between the time of Ezra (about 450 B.C.) and 200 B.C. We know this because the writer of the prologue to a translation of the book of Ecclesiasticus refers to the author, his grandfather, as having written this book after studying the books of the Law, and the books of the Prophets, and other books of the fathers. This book was written about 180 B.C. so that we know that by that date the books of the Prophets were put side by side with the books of the Law as part of the Jewish Scriptures.

The third section, the Writings, was apparently not completed at the time when the author of Ecclesiasticus wrote. This section includes eleven books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles. There is good evidence that the book of Daniel appeared at the time of the wars of the Maccabees (about 165 B.C.) and a few of the Psalms are probably as late as this also. This section was not finally settled until the Synod of Jamnia, A.D. 100 (a town near Joppa where the Jewish Sanhedrin settled after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.).

There was a good deal of dispute over the inclusion of The Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. They were

the last to be included, and it is not at all certain that they were in the Bible which Jesus used. But probably the section was fairly well settled by 100 B.C. since the Psalms of Solomon, written about 70 B.C., were not included in it.

There is also another body of books known as the Apocrypha (literally, the hidden books, that is, the books withdrawn from public use). The Jews of Alexandria had a Bible which was somewhat different from that of the Jews of Palestine. For them a translation of the sacred books was made into Greek. This translation is called the Septuagint. In this Greek version the order of the books is more like the order we have in our Bible, and a number of other books were added, mixed up with those recognized by the Jews of Palestine. These extra books were called the Apocrypha. The best are The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and First and Second Maccabees.

But there seems to have been a general feeling that these extra books were not on the same level of inspiration as the others. They are not quoted in the New Testament, though undoubtedly passages from The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus underlie some of the expressions used by Paul, John and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The books of the Apocrypha are in the Latin Bible used by the Roman Catholic Church which recognizes eleven out of the fourteen books as canonical. Protestants do not consider them to be part of the Bible, though the Church of England recognizes them as profitable for life and instruction, but not for proving points of doctrine.

The history of the Apocrypha is interesting as showing how impossible it is to draw a perfectly sharp line between biblical and other books.

We will now try to see how some of the books of the Old Testament came to be in the form in which we now have them.

Probably the earliest writings in the Old Testament, in their present form, are some of the prophetic books,

such as Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. But the very earliest literature of the Hebrews was poetry and ballads. Several collections of these were made, as for example, 'The Book of the Upright' (2 Sam. 18 : 27) from which comes the elegy of David for Jonathan, and 'The Book of the Wars of Jehovah' (Num. 21 : 14) containing songs of Israel's heroes, such as, perhaps, the Song of Deborah. There were also stories which were handed down.

When the nation settled down in Palestine these songs and stories were collected into various histories. In process of time these histories were combined into the large work which forms the first five books of our Bible.

An ancient writer of Israel was not an historian in the modern sense. He was a compiler. He did not write a fresh account, but selected from the various collections before him those passages which he thought worth preserving, and copied them out just as they were, only very rarely showing what his source was. He did not use inverted commas to show when he was quoting. There was no question of plagiarism. He was just using what was the ordinary method of the times of writing history.

Thus in the Pentateuch we find many different collections brought together, and so sometimes we get different and contradictory accounts of the same event. Scholars have been able to find four main documents that were used in compiling the Pentateuch.

The oldest of these four is a compilation of Judean traditions which was probably made in the latter half of the ninth century before Christ. Jehovah is spoken of in this history as if He were a man. He walks in the garden He has planted. He comes down from heaven to watch the builders of the tower of Babel. He shuts the door of the ark behind Noah. Jehovah is very real to this writer. His work is really a history of humanity, and then of Israel to the death of David. It is a collection of stories arranged more or less in chronological order. This document is

known as J. because it is the only one which uses the name Jehovah for God in the book of Genesis.

About a century later another account was written by a prophet in Northern Israel. The writer of this account is especially interested in the sanctuaries, heroes and events connected with the Northern Kingdom. It is very different in language and style from J. The word Elohim is used for God in it, so it is known as E. God is no longer spoken of as we would speak of a man. He does not eat and talk with men, but speaks through dreams and voices from heaven (Gen. 20 : 3 ; 21 : 7).

A third account was written probably towards the end of the seventh century B.C. It deals chiefly with laws and customs, and was accepted as the law of Judah at the time of the reforms under Josiah. It includes the main part of Deuteronomy, and is known as D.

After the exile a new version of Jewish history was compiled at Babylon by the priests. Its interest centres in doctrine and ceremonies. The writer connects his stories with the origins of rites and ceremonies and institutions (e.g. the Sabbath, Gen. 2 : 1-4, and circumcision, Gen. 17). In this story of the Creation, God does not form man from the dust, as in the earlier prophetic account, but by word of command, and man is shown to be the climax of a series of creative acts according to a divine plan. The style of this document is that of a lawyer, formal and with many repetitions. This is known as P. or the Priestly document.

These four documents J., E., D., P. were combined, perhaps about the third century B.C. to form the Pentateuch as we now have it. It must be understood, of course, that none of these histories survive today except as portions are found imbedded in the Pentateuch. Scholars, by careful study, have been able to find out that there are these four documents, and can with more or less certainty pick out which parts of the first five books of the Bible belong to each. There is not room in this booklet to go into the

different ways in which they can do this. The important thing for us to remember is that there are these four different strands in the Pentateuch. This explains for us why sometimes we get two apparently different accounts of the same event, as with the story of the Creation, and of the Flood, and also why we find differing ideas of God. When we understand this, then these differences do not trouble us, especially when we remember that the Pentateuch is a book of spiritual experience framed round a history. It is a religious interpretation of history, not a history written according to modern ideas of accurate history writing.

No student of the subject, or course, would seek to deny that the historical writings of the Old Testament contain much material of the greatest historical value from the strictly historical point of view. But we have always to remember that the writers were not primarily concerned with history as such. Their aim was a religious one. It is significant that the books from Joshua to Kings were placed in the Hebrew Bible among the 'prophets'. This gives us a hint as to what their true function was. They were considered from the prophetic standpoint.

Very much the same kind of process as we have traced in the case of the Pentateuch was followed in the case of the other historical books of the Old Testament. The production of the books of the Prophets was somewhat different.

Most of the prophecies given by the prophets were in the form of short poems. How far the prophets collected their own poems we cannot tell, but we know that Jeremiah made one such collection, and had it read to the people. But whoever made them, such collections were made.

But it is not easy to find the principles according to which collections of prophecies were made. Sometimes we find a collection of prophecies about foreign nations; sometimes those prophecies that begin with the same word have been put together in one collection. Sometimes

one particular word has been taken, and all prophecies containing that word have been placed together without any thought of whether they are connected in subject matter or not. There is no arrangement according to dates of writing, and it is often very difficult to determine when, in a particular prophet's life, a particular prophecy was written. We come up against the same thing as we met with in the historical books; the purpose of the compilers is religious, not historical.

Sometimes, as well as prophecies, we find autobiographical material. This is usually in prose, and tells of the prophet's experiences. There is much material of this sort in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and some in Amos and Hosea and other prophets. Most of this material has certainly come from the prophets themselves. But as well as this we find biographical material, written in the third person, about the prophet. Such material must have been written by disciples of the prophet in question. It is certain therefore that the prophets did not compile the books in the form in which we have them now.

The prophets were men who had a message from God for the people of their times. They were men who spoke *for* God. They did not seek to lay down maps by which people might foretell the future. This is an altogether wrong conception of the work of a prophet. The prophet is first and foremost a man with a message for his own times. But because the truth of God is eternal, the message of these men is valid for later times as well, especially when people get into the same sort of position as the Jews were in. But to understand the writings of the prophets we must always remember that they were speaking to an audience which was round about them, not to people living thousands of years later.

So we see again how in the books of the Prophets there has been a process of compilation and in some cases, as in the book of Isaiah, where we have the prophecies of

three and possibly four different men, the work of more than one prophet is included in the one book which goes by the name of only one of the authors. Then we also have fragments of biography and autobiography mixed in with the prophecies.

In the book of Psalms we see again the same process at work. This is a collection of the religious poetry of the Hebrews, gradually compiled during several centuries and intended chiefly for use in the public worship of the temple. The final settlement of this compilation in its present form probably took place sometime after the exile. The time of the final acceptance of the book as part of the Jewish Scriptures may well have been that of the religious revival that accompanied the success of the Maccabean revolt, and the downfall of the Greek party among the priests and the nobles.

To sum up then, the Hebrews did not have, like Christianity and Islam, a sacred book. The Hebrew religion had already had a long history before its adoption in 621 B.C. of an authoritative document. There was a long period, during which religious life was guided by customs and the preaching of the priests and prophets, before the books of the Law finally were accepted as the standard.

Much of what is in the Old Testament was not intended, when it was written at various times by various people, to form part of a sacred book. But these writings are the literary expression of a people whose main interest was religious. But at the same time, along with the religiously motivated writings there are also found writings which are purely national and in no sense religious, or which were little affected by religion. David's elegies over Saul and Jonathan and Abner are examples of this. There are thus writings here and there which have been gathered up along with the rest which, we feel, have little of religion in them.

The Old Testament then consists of the remains of national literature and literature which was the product of the religious spirit. It is the product of numerous authors whose work has been brought together by compilers whose aim was almost always a religious one, and who were naturally limited by the customs and writing conventions of their times. But through it all we see the thread running which unites it into one whole, the motif which we find in the first verse, 'In the beginning, God'. This religious aim and purpose binds the whole diverse collection into one illuminating whole.

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## WHY TEACH THE OLD TESTAMENT?

It is sometimes argued that since our religion is the Christian religion and since it is in Jesus Christ that we have been given the full revelation of God, all our work with young people should be to teach them about Jesus Christ and His life and death and teaching. The Old Testament is not necessary, and, indeed, in many ways is distinctly harmful. Difficulties are raised by it, and it becomes a stumbling block to faith rather than an aid. The main thing is for our children to get a firm foundation of knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that for this we should concentrate on the Gospels and the Acts, and not bother with the Old Testament, with its many primitive ideas of God and His dealings with men.

Now there is much in this point of view which is true. Our first and main task is to give our children, as they grow up, a firm foundation of knowledge of Jesus Christ and to bring them to a saving experience of Him. It is of the greatest importance that their thinking should be so permeated with the principles and practice of Jesus, that His life and teaching become the standards by which they judge the value of what they read and hear. Of this there can be, I think, no doubt whatever. It is Jesus Christ, His life and death, that must be the touchstone to which everything in life is referred. Problems of conduct and life must be solved in the light of what Jesus has revealed to us, and therefore, in all religious education, it is Jesus Christ who must be central.

At the same time, although this is true, it is also true that there are a number of reasons why study of the Old Testament is vital for those who are growing into the Christian life, and there are a great many essential lessons which can be learned from it, provided it is properly taught, and not simply given to children indiscriminately. This is a most important proviso. The teacher who uses the Old Testament must know what he or she is doing. Otherwise there is danger of great harm being done. But provided the teacher understands what the Old Testament really is, and how it should be used, its use can be of the greatest spiritual and religious help to young people.

1. In the first place, I would emphasize the necessity of a right understanding of what the Old Testament is, and of the necessity of explaining its true nature to those who are growing up.

'It is true to say that as men are, so they conceive God to be; but it is more true to say that as they conceive God, so they grow to be. For the idea of God, remaining for long periods little changed, is a steady force shaping the minds of generations, not by means of voluntary piety but through the social imagination. The character of an acknowledged and unseen power, whether conceived as fetish or warrior or judge or as vast mechanical force, is always in the background of the imagination of the community, and thus becomes the foundation of its philosophy of life.' \*

It is because the idea of God which a man has determines his philosophy of life, and therefore his actions, that it is very important for us to present those who are growing up, and are in process of arriving at their idea of God, with a correct idea of the Old Testament and of its teaching. A great deal of the weakness of Christianity in the modern world, and of the weakness of individual Christians, is due to the fact that they have a wrong idea of God, which is

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\* The Lord of Thought, *Dougall and Emmet*, pp. 5-6, S.C.M.

definitely sub-Christian. This idea they have got from an uninformed reading of the Old Testament. The human mind has the faculty of departmentalizing itself, and it is unfortunately possible for unreflecting people to hold contradictory ideas at the same time, and, if brought face to face with this contradiction, to resort to all kinds of mental tricks to resolve these contradictions without giving up any of them.

A misunderstanding of the nature of the Bible, and especially of the Old Testament, is responsible for large numbers of Christian people having an idea of God which cannot be reconciled with the revelation of God given us by Jesus Christ. It is also responsible, in the case of numbers who recognize the difference between the idea of God held by those of whom we have the record in the Old Testament, and that given us by Jesus, for spiritual difficulties which can become most acute, even to the point of destruction of faith.

It is impossible for a person who accepts, whether reflectingly or unreflectingly, the idea of God present in many parts of the Old Testament, to live a practical life which is based on the idea of God the Father which should be the guiding light of the Christian. It is therefore imperative that all who are followers of Jesus Christ, and all those who are growing up into fellowship with Christ, should understand the real nature of the Old Testament, and of what we have in the Old Testament.

We cannot hope to get the real value from the Bible which God intends us to have, unless we understand that in it we have the account of the gradual revelation to man by God of Himself and His will. Once we understand that in the Old Testament we have the account of the progressive revelation of God, of how He worked out His purposes in history, particularly in the history of one particular people, then the danger of our holding an idea of God which will result in sub-Christian action largely dis-

appears. As long as this fundamental fact is ignored or not understood, we will have large numbers of people accepting the ideas of God held by primitive people who were at the beginning of a long quest for God, and hence acting in ways which can in no way be reconciled with the teaching and life of Jesus. To be convinced of the truth of this we have only to look at the state of the modern world. The fact that so many actions of individuals and of communities are justified in their eyes, is because they accept as valid, the ideas of God held by Moses and David, without making any discrimination between what was primitive and temporary in their thought, and what was of permanent validity as determined by the full revelation of God given us by Jesus.

Now all Christian adults and all Christian children will read the Old Testament, and rightly. But this means that unless they are given the correct idea of the Old Testament and the correct attitude to it, they will surely go astray. It is necessary for us to see to it that no one goes through our schools, and no one attends our Churches, without being given that basis of information about the Old Testament, about its nature, and about the 'progressiveness' of its teaching, which will enable them to get a correct idea of God and His will. And particularly they should be given that attitude to the Old Testament which will enable them to escape the apparent necessity of holding two conflicting sets of ideas about God, one gleaned from parts of the Old Testament, and the other from the Gospels. Hence the urgent necessity of teaching the Old Testament from the modern point of view, and not merely trying to get pupils to learn the facts of history contained in it. As a mere record of facts, and of the teaching of numerous writers at various stages of spiritual development, the teaching of the Old Testament can be a dangerous thing. Set forth as a record of man's spiritual progress, and of God's gradual revelation of Himself, the teaching of the

Old Testament can be a most inspiring thing, strengthening faith and making clear God's ways with men.

2. Secondly, it is not possible to understand the mind of Christ unless we study the Old Testament, and particularly the writings of the prophets. We forget that the things that a person takes for granted, the assumptions he makes, the things which he does not think it necessary to make explicit, are almost as important as what he declares openly. Now this is certainly true of Jesus. He was ministering to a people whose whole lives were bound up with what we call the Old Testament. It is in the Old Testament that we find the things which, because He was speaking to such a people, He could take for granted. In His recorded teaching we have the efforts of Jesus to lead His people on from what they already had, to make explicit what was implicit in the highest teaching of their prophets. In other words, there was a great deal which Jesus firmly believed, and which was part of the texture of His thinking and religion, which He never mentions, because it was common ground between Himself and those to whom He came. If we are to find out what these things were which Jesus took for granted, we have to study the Old Testament. For instance, it is often said that Jesus paid no attention to social conditions, and gave no teaching on social problems. But it is probable that He thoroughly endorsed all the social teaching we find in the Prophets, and the social legislation found in the Law. This was common ground for all Jews. It was accepted by Jesus. But we do not usually take this fact into account.

Besides understanding the assumptions which Jesus made, by studying the Old Testament, we also gain a knowledge of the foundations on which He based a great deal of His teaching. In particular, a study of the Old Testament enables us to understand better the developments which Jesus made in the teaching of the prophets. We can see how He took up the universalism reached by the authors of

Jonah and of Second Isaiah, and developed this high light of Old Testament teaching into His own great message to mankind. We can see how He took up the concept of the suffering servant and made it His own, of how He accepted the idea of the Jews as a missionary people to the world, which we find in the Old Testament, and made that the corner stone of His own ministry. Thus a knowledge of the leading ideas of the Old Testament is necessary for a full understanding of Jesus and His work and teaching.

3. Thirdly, in the Old Testament we have the record of the development of a people who were religious. The Hebrews were free from the dualism, the separation of thought and action, of material and spiritual, of religious and secular, which poisons and devitalizes all our modern life. The Hebrews were a people for whom all aspects of life, politics, social activities, science, morals, were integrally bound up with religion. For them religion is never one sphere of human activity or thought, it is the whole of life. Thus the life of the Hebrew was integrated in a way that has been true of no other people before or since. Thus, in the history of the Hebrews as we have it in the Old Testament, we have the history of a supremely religious people. This is why they are called the chosen people of God. This is why God was able to become incarnate in a Jew. 'The Hebrew form of thought rebels against the very idea of a distinction between the secular and the religious aspects of life. It demands the synthesis of action and reflection.'\*

Thus a study of the Old Testament give us an unrivalled opportunity to bring home to our pupils the lesson that religion is something for the whole of life, and that it is the integrating force in life. A study of the lives of the men of the Old Testament enables pupils to understand how people can live their religion.

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\* The Clue to History, *J. Macmurray*, S.C.M., p. 29.

4. Because of this characteristic of the Hebrews, we have in the Old Testament a record of the development of religion. The inner history of the Hebrews is the story of growth in religion. We have in the Old Testament the story of a nation's quest for God, and of how God guided them along the path. For this reason it gives us an excellent opportunity for relating history to the purpose of God, and of showing how God works out His purposes in history. We are able to combat the idea that God is, as it were, outside history and outside the world, and, on the other hand, to press home the truth that God is a Worker, that His work of creation is still going on, and that God works in His world; in short, that God has a purpose, and that He is slowly but surely accomplishing that purpose. In the Old Testament all history is related to God, and that is a lesson that the modern world needs to learn.

To quote Professor Macmurray again:

'By escaping, in this fashion, the tendency to dualism, the history of the Hebrews becomes a history of the development of religion. In this historic process reflection remains integrated with social experience. The world which is thought religiously is the actual world of social history. This means that Jewish reflection thinks history as the act of God. Where our historians say, "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" or "Nelson won the battle of Trafalgar", the Jewish historian says, "God brought His people up out of the Land of Egypt". This is no mere concession to religious prejudice, but the continuous form which all Hebrew reflection takes. It means that Hebrew thought is at once religious and empirical. It is religious in that it thinks history as the act of God. It is empirical in that it reflects upon history in order to discover the nature of God and the laws of divine agency. And since the intention of God is the realization of His purpose for His chosen people, this reflection is an effort to discover the true principles of

social life. Social disaster or social failure is, therefore, always interpreted by Jewish thought as evidence of national sin, that is to say, of a national departure from the purpose of God for His people, and this failure is also interpreted as an act of God in history to bring His people back to the acceptance of His purpose.\*

The Old Testament, rightly taught and interpreted, can therefore help our pupils to understand the working of God in history.

5. Fifthly, from many parts of the Old Testament we can get a message from God for our times. The word of God which came to the prophets of old, although it came to them in connection with the times in which they lived, and for the conditions and circumstances in which they lived, yet because it was the word of God, it has a validity for all time. It is perfectly true that the word of God in the Old Testament is mingled with the word of man, and that we cannot get a message for our times from all that we read there. But, in spite of this, it is also true that there is a great deal of what was written in Old Testament times which does speak to us today, and where we do find the eternal voice of God. From such places we can gain a tremendous amount that is of the highest spiritual value to us. This is chiefly true of the writings of the prophets, but it is also true of the history and of the historical characters and their actions. In the Old Testament we have the record of history written from the point of view of those who saw God in action in history. And therefore, because God is still in action in history, we get guidance for today when we seek to find the will of God for ourselves, and when we seek to find how God would have us act.

There is a sense in which history, if it does not repeat itself exactly, at least does confront mankind with similar

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\* *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

situations. In spite of all that scientific historians may say, there is a real moral value in history, if we look to what has happened to mankind for guidance as to how to avoid the mistakes that have been made in the past, and for guidance for positive and constructive action for the future. We can see how and why men have failed in the past, and what have been the results of courses of action which they have adopted. This is particularly true of the Jews. In the history of no nation do we find the reason for mistakes and misfortunes so definitely and religiously, and I use the term in its literal meaning, set forth. It is in the Old Testament that we have history told from the religious point of view. And because of this we can get guidance for ourselves today, for the troubles of the modern world are fundamentally religious ones. A study of the Old Testament and particularly of the historical books, can give pupils a religious attitude to the whole study of history down to the present day, and to the solution of all the troubles that have been banking up during the last two centuries. Let me give some examples of what I mean.

‘A large part of the Bible is the story of a nation which believed in God and served God as none of its enemies did, yet which was not infrequently defeated in war, and which ultimately ceased to be a free and independent nation; while the very heart and core of it is the life story of One Who trusted and obeyed God as no one else on earth ever did, yet Whose earthly life ended in an early and unjust death on a criminal’s gallows. It looks as if the faith which is sustained and educated by the Bible is a faith which must often be learned and held in the teeth of appearances; it looks as if we are forced to realize that the victory of God’s cause on earth does not altogether depend on the worldly victory or prosperity of God’s people. There is little in the Bible to suggest that days when “everything in the garden is lovely” are days when men and women will learn real faith in God; there is much to

suggest that our faith has to be learned in times of trouble, and that God is best seen when outward things are going wrong. It was often when the night was dark, that the brave believers of the Bible saw the shining of the eternal stars. This is certainly one reason why the Bible is a book for bad times; it so often confronts us with men who found God, or were found by God, when life was all dark for them.\*

We see how the oppression and persecution of the Hebrews in Egypt brought them to a new realization of a God Who had delivered them from slavery and how this realization was deepened by the wanderings in the wilderness. The triumph of Jezebel and her evil religion brought forth an Elijah. Again and again the corruption of the Jewish people brought forth a prophetic message and national calamity brought fresh knowledge of God. The exile taught the lesson of individual responsibility for sin, and the destruction of the national life set in motion the universalist trend with the idea of an Israel which would be a light to the Gentiles. The Old Testament continually shows us how the Jewish religion progressed through the suffering of the people and of individuals. And is there a lesson more needed in our present day than the one suggested in the quotation just given, that victory in war does not inevitably come to those who are in the right, nor to those who consider themselves to be the religious and moral elite of the world? Victory in war does not by any means provide proof that we have been doing God's will, or that God has been fighting for us.

An example of the startling way in which the message given in olden times applies to our own day and situation comes in the 10th chapter of Isaiah. I shall give extracts from this chapter simply changing proper names.†

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\* The Bible Speaks to Our Day, *G. Barclay*, S.C.M., p. 9.

† I am indebted for this suggestion to a sermon by Douglas Horton entitled 'O German, the Rod of Mine Anger' in 'The Rebel Church' published by James Clarke, pages 54-55.

'O Japanese, the rod of mine anger . . . .

I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit he meaneth not so; neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

For he saith . . . .

Is not Singapore as Hong-kong? Is not Shanghai as Manila? Is not Nanking as Rangoon?

Shall I not, as I have done unto Nanking so do to Delhi?

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon India, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the leader of Japan and the glory of his high looks.

For he saith, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.

And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant . . . . shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One, in truth.'

In India today, the Christian community is looking with doubt and fear on what the future holds. The outlook is not rosy. Troublous and probably dangerous times are surely ahead of us. The Old Testament and its study of the way in which it shows how God can enable us to use such troublous times to reveal Himself more fully, and to make us a light to the Gentiles must bring comfort and give us a clearer light on the way that lies ahead, if we will but take it and its lessons to heart. Perhaps nowhere is better illustrated the guidance of history, than in this respect.

In other ways, too, the Old Testament speaks to our day.

The problems of the relationship of the Christian individual to the State is very much with us today. The Old Testament has its contribution to make to the solution of this problem. No one can read the story of David's sin and of Nathan's fearless rebuke of his King, who after all was an Eastern potentate who could have ended his life there and then, without realizing that for the Jews, God was the real head of the State. Even a powerful king like David bowed to the word of God. 'Thus saith the Lord' was the final word in that State. The absolute king hesitated to kill even an unpopular prophet like Jeremiah, accused of being a defeatist and a fifth columnist of his day. The individual who believed he had the word of God was acknowledged. But today whoever would think of addressing the Central Assembly with the words, 'Thus saith the Lord'? Does the Church stand before the rulers of the countries where it works and rebuke them for exploitation and oppression of the poor as Amos did in the official chapel of King Jeroboam? Does the Church stand out as the conscience of the rulers of the nations of the earth as Elijah did before Ahab and Nathan before David? Do any modern prophets bring home to Governors or Viceroy's their responsibility for much that goes on in the country which is surely contrary to the will of God? It would be as much as one's life was worth to do so, we say. But did not the prophets of old take their lives in their hands when they brought the word of the Lord to those in high places? Nothing is surer than that they did, and often they suffered for their boldness. But if we find one thing in the Old Testament, we find this, that God comes first, and the powers that be, are under Him. And the people of God are expected by Him to stand against the State when they find that the State or those who direct its policies are acting contrary to what they know to be the will of God.

Following on from this is another way in which the Old Testament speaks to our day.

'The history of Israel makes it clear that the prophets were very important people in the life of the community ; and Israel's prophets were men whose chief function was to tell forth the word of God. Sometimes they spoke to the people, sometimes to the Government or the ruling classes, and sometimes they spoke to the Government on behalf of the people, but always they spoke in the name of the Lord God, declaring His judgment, His will, His word. . . . They had their place in the national life ; they were recognized as a necessary and important part of the community. Because God is the Supreme authority, a nation needs, as part of its common life, those whose right and duty it is to speak to the Government and to the people in the name of the Lord.' \*

I suggest that a study of the Old Testament from this point of view, and particularly of the prophets and their lives and work, would teach us a great deal concerning the function of the Church, which we very badly need to realize afresh. If we did this we might get rid of this cry that the Church's job is to save souls, and not to interfere in matters of government and economics. The ancient prophets of Israel had no qualms about interfering wherever they saw that the word of God was needed. The nations of today need a recrudescence of the prophet in their midst, and of the call of conscience that the prophet represented. There is another wide field here where the Old Testament speaks to our modern world.

The sin of idolatry and the fulminations of the prophets against it figure largely in the Old Testament. As we read it there is continually borne in on us the importance the prophets placed on undivided loyalty to God. 'How long will ye halt between two opinions?' asks Elijah in

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\* *Ibid.*, p. 19.

scorn. And again and again we come up against the result of disloyalty to the light that had been given the people by God. Is there not here also a lesson that is badly needed in our modern world? The type of idol worshipped in these days may be different, but the principle involved is exactly the same, and the voice of God comes to us through the Old Testament as it did to the people of the time when the words were actually spoken, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.'

The two events to which I have already referred, the rebuking of David by Nathan and of Ahab by Elijah, bring out another message which is badly needed in these days, namely the value and rights, before God, of the common man. The king had no right to use his power against even one of his ordinary subjects. When he did so, he had to endure the rebuke of the man of God. We talk a great deal about democracy these days, though we do not always really understand all the implications of what we say. But we can find the fundamental principle on which Christian democracy is founded, the worth of the common man, in the Old Testament.

So one could go on multiplying instances, but I have written enough to show how the Old Testament speaks to our day, and that we can gain a great deal from its study.

But at the same time I would emphasize again that children should come to the Old Testament *after* gaining a knowledge of Jesus Christ and of His life and teaching. In the case of small children, as we shall see, the stories of the Old Testament may be used without harm. But as soon as children reach the age when they begin to compare and to think for themselves, and this is earlier than we often imagine, we must make sure that they have a firm foundation in the New Testament before doing any extensive work in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, a great deal of the value of the Old Testament, apart from the stories and the lives of its heroes, will be for those who are older. The

type of study which brings in the prophets, and draws out the messages of the writers of the Old Testament is suitable for pupils of 14-15 and older. For all, however, the proviso holds good, that the standards of Christian judgment must be supplied from the New Testament if we are to avoid great difficulties for the child.

When teaching the Old Testament there are certain facts which we have always to keep in mind as well as the essential considerations just given.

1. We have to remember that the Old Testament was not written for children or for young people. As we shall see, this is very important when dealing with the matter of telling Old Testament stories to children. But right through our work, whether it be with small children or with older ones we must realize that we are dealing with a book that was written for grown-ups. It therefore follows that we cannot use it just as it stands, with no adaptation or selection. A great deal of the material found in the Old Testament is unsuitable for young people, either because of the difficulty of understanding the message, or because it is ethically unsuitable for children at their stage of development. There must therefore be careful selection in the material which we use from the Old Testament.

2. We must always keep in mind that in the Old Testament we have the record of the gradual revelation of God of Himself to man, and of man's understanding of God. This is a fundamental consideration and there can be no true understanding of the teaching of the Old Testament, unless it is continually kept in mind. At the same time, the realization of this truth, enables both teachers and older children to solve many of the difficulties presented by the Old Testament, difficulties which otherwise are insoluble.

3. The writings of the Old Testament must be studied in relation to the times in which they were compiled and produced. Failure to do this is responsible for much of the

wrong interpretation given to the Old Testament, and for failure to hear, in the Old Testament, the real voice of God. This does not mean to say, of course, that these same writings have no message for us today. But if we wish to find that message, we will do so only as we study the writings in the light of their social, religious and political background.

4. We must realize that in the Old Testament we have the record of the gradual working out of God of His purpose. It is the record of a continual work of creation. A realization of this gives value to much that otherwise seems to have little vital connection with religion. Whether it be the history of the Hebrew people, the study of the lives of individual leaders of that people, of the religious development of the Jews, or of the ideals held up to the people by the great prophets, the golden cord which gives coherence and meaning to the whole is this conception of the living God at work in His world, carrying on His work of creation and carrying out His eternal purposes.

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## THE STORIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

With very young children up to the age of 7-8 the best use that we can make of the Old Testament is to use it as a source book for stories. There are numbers of stories in the Old Testament that can be used for children of this age, stories which are the religious classics of Judaism and of Christianity, and we should make full use of these. But at the same time we must keep several points in mind.

1. The Bible was not written for children. This is something we are very apt to forget. But we will never get the full value of the great stories of the Bible unless we do keep this fact in mind, for it has several important implications.

In the first place it means that we have to choose our stories carefully. We cannot adopt the attitude that because a story is in the Old Testament, therefore it is suitable, and our young children will benefit by it. We have to keep in mind the needs of the child, the effect that the story is likely to have on him, and whether the telling of this particular story is likely to be of benefit to the child. Because the Bible was not written for children there has naturally been no attempt to grade stories, or to tell them in such a way that small children will be interested in them. It is obvious that a young child will get little out of a story that is suitable for a child of 12 or 13 years of age, and also that we have to tell the story in a different way, supposing that it is suitable for children of both ages. But it is of particular importance for us to confine ourselves to those stories which will help on the religious growth of

the small child. This must be our principle when choosing what stories we shall tell.

In the second place, we have to realize that while the stories in the Bible are usually told with great skill and therefore with great simplicity, yet, at the same time, because they were told for adults, it is necessary for us to expand and elaborate, to bring in local colour, to give a setting, and to make the form of the story such that the small child will be interested. While one will naturally stick as closely as possible to the form we have in the Bible, yet because we are telling the story to children who have not been brought up in Palestine, but have been accustomed to different conditions, and because we are telling the stories to children with an entirely different background and history, living in a totally different age, they therefore require more than the bald narrative the Bible gives. This certainly does not apply so much to Indian children as it does to children of the West. But even with Indian children, additions and adaptations have to be made if the children are to get the best out of the story. The language, for one thing, has to be simplified, and, in some cases, parts have to be omitted which are unsuitable for children of tender years.

This is not to imply, of course, that there should be any change in the core of the story. It is the form and words which will be elaborated or simplified rather than the content. The story will be given as it is in the Bible. There will be no change in the bones of the story. But without touching the plot or the real content, a great deal can be done to bring the story into line with life as the child knows it. We must also be careful to see that any additions or adaptations which we make are justified and do not run counter to the story as we have it in the Bible. But a consecrated use of the imagination is essential when telling Old Testament stories if we are to give our children the

best we can. At the end of this chapter I have given some examples of stories told in the way in which I mean.

'The younger the class, the more certain it will be that Bible stories cannot be told just as they stand. Even in the Old Testament, and still more in the New, they are set down briefly and weightily, for the benefit, not of children, but of grown-up people. For children we must expand them and fill them with detail, and if the teacher is to do this he must take much time to prepare. If our knowledge is slight we must seek out sources of information; if our imagination is slow, we shall do well to seek the comments of persons more gifted than ourselves.' \*

I have said that we have to choose our stories for small children. What then are the tests that we use to determine whether any particular story should be used or not?

The first test is, Will this story help my children to believe in a God who is a God of love and the Father of Jesus Christ, and will it help them to understand a little better that the spiritual life is a reality, and that God is continually with them? We naturally will not use such words with the children. But this is the criterion which we will use ourselves. We will choose stories which will help our children to want to grow to be like God, concrete pictures of love and courage and faith and goodness, pictures of the care of God and of His mercy. In other words we will choose stories which will have a real religious, a real Christian, value for our children.

It must be remembered that I am speaking of small children, up to the age of eight years or so. With older children it is possible to get a religious value out of any story in the Bible. But this is after they have had a firm foundation of knowledge of the Gospels and the life and teaching of Jesus.

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\* The Scripture Lesson in the Elementary School, *H. Wodehouse*, S.C.M., p. 28.

The second test is the children themselves. Children vary greatly in the way in which stories affect them. I knew a small girl who was told the story of the crucifixion too soon, and in a careless way, and the effect on her, because she was easily affected, was that for years she did not want to hear the story again. In the same way there are stories in the Old Testament, such as Daniel in the lions' den, which may be quite all right for some children and quite wrong for others. The teacher must keep the needs and the natures of his children in mind when choosing his stories. A great deal depends of course on the way in which stories are told. The same story may be told so as to attract and help, or so as to repel and give difficulty. The test we must apply is the religious needs of our children, and to determine this we must understand the make-up of each child, just as we have to understand this in connection with the whole of our school work. Incidentally, this is one very strong reason for having Scripture taught in schools by the teachers who are teaching other subjects, and have the children all day in all their work. They know their children far better than any outsider coming in can possibly do, or than can one specialist for Scripture for the whole school.

A third test that we can apply to our stories is to see whether they show the response of man to God. Stories which show the love of man for man, of man for animals, of man's devotion to his duty and his God, of his attempts to live a better life, these are stories which usually will be well worth telling our little ones.

I would like to quote the following from 'Present Day Problems in Religious Teaching', a book which, though written twenty-five years ago, is very relevant to our Indian situation at present.

'Let us consider the case of the infants. Do such stories as we have instanced above (the sacrifice of Isaac; Korah, Dathan and Abiram; stories from Joshua and Judges)

pass the test of what constitutes really religious teaching? Do they show to the children the victorious power of the love of God and attract them to His service? In the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, even if a little child can be brought to see the fineness of Abraham in desiring to give his best to God, that child's Christian heart happily cannot conceive how any father who really loved his boy could possibly imagine putting him to death, and the thought of the loving Heavenly Father as suggesting the idea is as unthinkable . . . . . In the case of the story of Achan (which we remember to have seen in more than one infants' syllabus associated with the Eighth Commandment as a kind of "awful example") even if we can bring ourselves to believe (and to lead children to think) that death by stoning is a suitable punishment for a case of military looting, yet what does our compassion say to the punishment of Achan's wife and family? If there be a place for the story of Achan in the religious instruction syllabus at all it is surely with Standard VII (age about 14) when we are discussing the ethics of punishment, prison reform, the Borstal system and the little Commonwealth—all in connection with lessons on the Sermon on the Mount.

'The story of Noah's Ark is full of difficulties when taken with children of so young an age, that is, if they are interested enough to give it real thought. A father known to the writer found himself one Sunday afternoon, confronted with his four-year old boy and a Bible story-book showing a picture of Noah's Ark "floating" as he said, "somewhat arrogantly upon the waters". Drowning people were trying to climb in for safety, and a dead sheep floated by in the foreground. The four-year old's pity was soon aroused.

"Why are those people drowning, Daddy?"

'The father found himself somewhat haltingly explaining that the people were "naughty", "wicked"; they could have been in the Ark, but they had chosen to be wicked instead.

The child's fat fore-finger at once came down on the drowned sheep—"Sheep wicked too Daddy?"\* \*

I would suggest then, in the light of what we have considered, that such stories as the following are suitable for children up to the ages of 7-8. Any such list, however, can be one of suggestions only. In view of what we have said about using stories suited to the natures and needs of our children, we cannot lay down any hard and fast list. The teacher must always exercise his discretion, keeping in mind the special needs and special peculiarities of the class in front of him. But normally such stories as the following will be suitable.

1. Stories of the children of the Bible :—

The story of Ishmael and his mother being cast out.

The story of Joseph and his brothers.

The story of the baby Moses.

The story of Samuel in the temple.

The story of David the shepherd boy and the giant-killer.

The story of the little captive maid.

The story of the boy king Joash.

The story of Jephibosheth, the crippled child of Jonathan.

2. 'Family' Stories :—

Abraham and Lot (the quarrel of their herdsmen).

Jacob and Esau.

Ruth.

David and Absalom.

Elisha and the Shunamite woman.

Stories of David and Saul and Jonathan.

Stories of Joseph.

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\* Present Day Problems in Religious Teaching, *H. Lee. Macmillan*, pp. 73-74.

3. Stories from the lives of Hebrew heroes:—

Stories from the life of Moses and the history of the Israelites in the wilderness; for example:

The story of Moses' call.

The story of manna.

The story of the golden calf.

The water from the rock.

The story of the sending of the spies.

The story of Gideon.

Stories of Elijah and Elisha.

The story of Hezekiah.

Stories from the life of David.

4. Stories showing the care and love of God:—

Jacob's dream.

Joseph in prison.

Elijah and the ravens.

Elijah and the widow's cruse.

Elisha and the Shunamite woman's child.

The story of Naaman.

The three young men in the fiery furnace.

Daniel in the lions' den.

Jonah.

In some of these stories there are features which can be either left out, or relegated to the background. The reactions of the children with whom the teacher is dealing will determine the course to be followed. For instance, in telling the story of Daniel in the lions' den, it is better to stop with Daniel's release, and not give the gruesome picture of his enemies and their families being devoured by the lions.

There are a number of these stories where the miraculous element comes in. Usually this causes no difficulty with children of this age. They do not have questions raised in their minds by such things as the never-ending supplies in the widow's cruse. When children grow older and begin

to ask questions about such things then we have to face the whole question of miracles in the Old Testament.

There are some stories to which no reference has been made, namely the Creation stories and the stories in the first chapters of Genesis. Some competent authorities, e.g. Professor Nairne in the appendix to the Archbishop's report on the Teaching Office of the Church, on the Old Testament, believe that nothing in the first eleven chapters of Genesis is fitted for young children. I think it is certainly safe to say that such stories as that of the Flood, and of the turning of Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, are not suitable for young children. The Creation stories, told simply as 'wonder' stories, will probably cause no trouble. Children, being at the 'fairy-story' stage, will often look on them as fairy-stories, and indeed, since they are legends, it is better to present them in this way, so that children simply accept them as fairy-stories of long ago of people in another land than our own. We should never attempt to tell them as correct history, for two reasons. One is that this idea will have to be reversed when the children grow older, and thus unnecessary difficulties will be caused to them, and the second is that children at this age do not worry about historical truth, and will accept the stories quite readily just as stories.

But later on we have to make a different approach to these same stories. When children have passed the fairy-story stage and are asking with the matter-of-factness of the 8 to 12 period, 'Is it true?' then we have to deal with the Creation stories from the historical point of view; all the more so, as by this time children are gaining knowledge in other subjects, history and science, which seems to conflict with what is in the Bible.

In dealing with older children, we have to give them, even though it may be in a very elementary fashion, the fact that the Bible was written with a religious purpose in view, and that it is not a modern scientific or historical

treatise. The scientific and historical knowledge of the writers was that of their times. But their religious experience, and therefore their religious knowledge, was far ahead of their times. It is this religious element in the creation stories that makes them valuable. This point may well be brought out by giving children the Creation stories current in other countries, particularly in Babylon, bringing out the essential difference between them and the Bible stories. There may be similarities with the Babylonian stories. But it is the radical differences that matter. In this way the true function of the Bible stories may be brought home to children, and the difficult question 'Is it true?' may be answered.

We have also to give children some idea of the way in which Genesis was compiled, even though, again it may be in a very elementary way. This may be approached by getting pupils to work out parallel versions of the two accounts of the creation given in the first three chapters in Genesis, and thus discovering the differences. A chart something as follows may be worked out.

1st Story: Genesis 1 & 2 : 1-3	2nd Story: Genesis 2 : 4-7, 18-25
Vv. 6, 9: the waters are made before the land.	V. 6: waters apparently made after the land.
Vv. 26, 27: man is created in the image of God and no special method of creation is mentioned.	Vv. 7, 21, 22: In this account there is no mention of man being made in the image of God. The special method is elaborated.
Vv. 26, 27: man is made last after animals.	
Vv. 11-28: the order of creation is	Vv. 5, 7, 19, 20, 22: the order of creation is
(1) plants,	(1) plants,
(2) day and night,	(2) man,
(3) fish,	(3) animals,
(4) birds,	(4) birds,
(5) animals,	(5) woman.
(6) man (together with woman).	\

Vv. 29-30: man is given every tree and herb for food.

Vv. 16-17: man is forbidden to 'eat the fruit of one particular' tree.

Vv. 26, 28: man is given power over the whole earth and all animals.

V. 15: man is made to look after the garden of Eden.

In this account the word used for 'God' is Elohim.

In this account the word for 'God' is Jahveh or Jehovah.

After an exercise such as this it will be easy for children to understand that there are different strands in the book of Genesis. It is not necessary, of course, to go into all the intricacies of the four documents at this stage. It is enough for pupils to know that there are such different documents, and that Genesis is a synthesis of these documents. The way will then be prepared for them, and much future difficulty will be avoided.

It must always be remembered, in presenting the Creation stories, that emphasis must be laid on the purpose of the writer, which was to show that all things had their beginning in God, Who is the Creator of the world and all that is in it. We may not, in the light of modern knowledge, agree that the methods described in Genesis are correct, but the main fact, that everything was done by the hand of God, remains, whatever the method He may have used.

When we come to a higher age level, the 8-12 group, we will still, at the beginning of this period, concentrate on stories. There will be a gradual transition from the purely story type of work to the biographical approach. With children of eight, nine and ten, stories will still form the main part of what is done. These stories will be of a more advanced type from those used with younger children. Then, from the isolated type of story, there will be a development to the biography, or the connected series of stories dealing with one particular Bible hero. This will in turn lead up to the stage towards the end of this age period, when biography is tackled in a more systematic

way, as suggested in the next chapter. Such stories as the following may be used at the beginning of the 8-12 period.

The call of Abraham.

Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob and Esau.

Jacob's Exile.

Stories from the life of Joseph:

Joseph and his brothers—1.

Joseph in prison.

Joseph and Pharaoh.

Joseph and his brothers—2.

Stories from the life of Moses:

His birth and rescue.

His flight to Midian and life there.

His call.

His bringing the Hebrews out of Egypt.

His giving the law at Sinai.

The story of the spies.

Joshua and the capture of Jericho.

The story of Gideon.

The story of Samuel as a boy.

The story of Saul becoming King.

David and Goliath.

David's adventures with Saul.

The Friendship of David and Jonathan.

David and Absalom.

Solomon and the Temple.

The rebellion of Jeroboam.

Elijah and Ahab.

Elijah on Mount Carmel.

Stories from the life of Elisha.

The story of Naaman.

The story of Hezekiah.

The persecution of Jeremiah.

The story of Nehemiah.

The stories of Daniel.

This list is not exhaustive but is indicative of the kind of story which may be used. Many of the stories which were used with younger children will be used again, but will be told in a manner suitable for the higher age level.

### *Hints on Expanding Old Testament Stories.*

1. Find out all you can about the social customs of the time, of how people lived, their dress, ways of eating, their work, their feasts and festivals, in short, all the details of their everyday life that you can get hold of. It is details such as these which help greatly to make the story interesting to small children who are interested in such things. You should also find out all you can about the historical and political background of the time of the story.

2. Try to enter into the feelings of the actors in the story. This is rarely done in the brief Biblical narratives, but if we can imagine the feelings of the people in the story, it will help us to make it much more vivid. For example the loneliness and home-sickness which Jacob must have felt that night at Bethel, Joseph's brothers' feelings about the spoilt tell-tale, the tension and hope and fear in the heart of Moses' mother, and so on.

3. It often makes a story more interesting if it is told as if one of the characters in the story were telling it instead of an outsider. Thus Daniel might describe his experiences to his son, or Ruth tell her story to her son.

4. The interest in a story is increased considerably if a free use of direct speech is made.

5. For small children there should be as much repetition of phrases or even of full sentences as possible.

6. It also often helps to add interest if characters in the story who are not named in the original, are given names. It also makes the telling of the story easier.

7. Try to give some idea of the bodily appearance and of the dress of the main characters. Often one will have

to call on one's imagination here, but sometimes details, as in the case of David, are given which will be a guide.

8. Try to imagine the motives, and the difficulties, of the characters in the story. Was it easy for Jonathan to give up the hope of the throne? What did Samuel feel like when left by his mother and when he had to tell Eli the bad news? Was Eli as bad as he was painted?

9. When preparing to telling the story, it is a great help to get fixed in the mind a series of pictures of the different incidents or stages in the story. If one can actually imagine such pictures, then the telling of the story becomes a matter of graphically describing these pictures.

10. It will often add greatly to the interest of a story if the same story is told from different points of view. That is, it may be told as by an outside historian in the usual way in which a story is told. Then it may be told as one or two characters in the story would have told it, if they had been narrating the incident. These versions will normally be in the first person. I give three such ways in which the story of the little captive maid might have been told as an illustration of what I mean. The story is first told as it might have been by an outside story-teller. This is an expanded version of the incident as it is related in the Old Testament. Then the story is told as the little maid herself might have told it to her friends. Then the story is told as Naaman might have told it.

### THE CAPTIVE MAID

A little girl was playing outside her house in a village in the country of Palestine. Her father was working in the fields and her mother was busy cooking their midday meal inside the house. Suddenly, there was the sound of horses galloping. Fierce shouts filled the air, followed by cries and screams. The little girl who was playing quietly in the road, jumped up and began to run to her home. But before she could reach the door, her mother rushed out to

meet her. At the same time the road was filled with fierce dark men on horseback. They had spears in their hands, and bows and quivers of arrows over their shoulders.

One of the men seized the mother and dragged her along with him as he went on down the road. Another caught up the little girl and slung her across his horse in front of him. That was the last she saw of her mother. Although she did not know it, her father was lying dead, out in the fields where he had been working, killed by a spear thrust.

The men who had raided the village were men from the country of Syria. At the time when this little girl was living, many bands of fierce men from Syria kept on raiding the towns and villages of Palestine. They killed those who fought against them, and carried away men, women, and children as slaves to their homes in Syria.

The man who had caught up the little girl carried her on his horse for many miles until they were far from her home. Then he and his companions camped for the night. The little girl was tied up lest she should try to escape in the night. She sobbed herself to sleep, tired out with the sorrow and fear of the day, and with the hard journey. The next day they were up at dawn, and again travelled all day. There were other prisoners with the band. Some who could go no further were left to die at the side of the road. Some tried to escape and were killed. Our little maid was fortunate in that her captor had some kind feelings, and carried her on his horse with him.

So day by day they travelled away from Palestine and home till they came to the great city of Damascus. The band, with their prisoners, came into the middle of the city. There the prisoners were herded together, and many people gathered to look at them. Just as the captor of the little girl put her down, a nobleman of high rank passed by. He was a great general named Naaman, and a favourite of the king of Syria.

'Hullo,' he said. 'That is a nice little girl you have there. Where did you get her?'

'I captured her in a village of Palestine which we raided a short time ago, Sir', answered the man.

'Will you sell her to me?' asked Naaman.

The man could not refuse his general's request, although he had wanted to keep the little girl for himself. So the little Hebrew girl became the slave of Naaman the great Syrian general.

He took her away with him to his house, and spoke kindly to her. He could see the fear and the sadness in her eyes, and knew what she must be feeling. When he got to his home, Naaman took the little girl to his wife and told her that he had bought a little slave girl for her, who would wait on her and do whatever she wanted. 'Be kind to her', he said. 'She is very young, and has just been taken away from her home.'

So the little girl began to work for Naaman's wife. Gradually she lost her fear as she found that her mistress treated her kindly. But she could not lose the sadness in her heart, and she continually wondered what had happened to her mother and her father. For many nights she cried herself to sleep.

As the days went by and she went about her work and got accustomed to the household, she found that even in this great palace there was sadness. Naaman, the great general, was a leper, and could not be cured of his leprosy. The little girl soon found that this made her mistress very sad. One day she said to her, 'In the land I come from there is a prophet who can cure leprosy.' 'But' answered her mistress, 'how can that be? No one can cure leprosy'.

'Well', said the little girl, 'I know that in Samaria there is a prophet who has cured people of leprosy, because I have heard my father talking about him. If my lord Naaman could only go there, I am sure that he could be cured.'

'No,' answered her mistress. 'That cannot be true. You must have misunderstood what your father said.'

But one of the other servants who had been listening to the conversation told Naaman what the little girl had said. Naaman, who naturally was willing to do anything to get rid of his terrible disease, asked the little girl about what she had said. She told him what she had told her mistress. Naaman at once went to the King of Syria, and told him what he had heard. The king was as anxious as Naaman was that he should be cured, so he at once sent him off to Palestine. After some time, Naaman came back to Damascus, cured, and he was full of gratitude to the prophet Elisha who had cured him, and to the little slave girl who had forgotten her own sorrow in order to take away the sorrow of her master. So this little girl paid back good for evil.

The Bible does not tell us what happened to her. But I like to think that Naaman, who was a very powerful man, sought out her mother and then sent them both back to their home in the land of Palestine.

#### THE STORY OF THE CAPTIVE MAID AS TOLD BY HERSELF

One day I was playing in the road outside my home in a village in Palestine, when suddenly I heard shouts and cries. I saw some strange men on horses coming towards me. I ran towards my home, but just as I was almost at the door, a man caught me. My mother had come out, and another man caught her. They dragged us along the road, and the man who had caught me pulled me up in front of him and rode off with me. I do not know what happened to my mother. I never saw her again. I was terribly afraid, and cried and cried until the man who had me said he would hit me if I did not stop.

We rode on all day and at night when he and his companions stopped for the night they tied me up so that I

would not run away. The next day they started off as soon as it was daylight. I got no chance to run away and even if I had, I did not know where to go as we had come a long way from home. At first I had to walk but after a while the man who had caught me took me up on to his horse, in front of him.

We went on for many days like this, till one day we came to a big city which I found was called Damascus. I was taken with the rest of the prisoners who had been captured by different people to an open place in the middle of the town. Just as we got there I saw a man dressed in fine clothes coming along. Everyone seemed to be very respectful to him. As he was passing me he looked at me and stopped. Then he began to talk to the man who had brought me on his horse. They talked for a while and then the nobleman signed to me to go with him. I did not know what was going to happen to me.

After a while we reached a big house and went in. Inside the nobleman took me to a lady, and said something to her which I did not understand. Then he went out and left me with the lady. She was kind to me, and I found that I was to be her servant. At first it was very difficult as I did not understand what anyone said. But gradually I learnt a few words, and how to do the things that she wanted me to do. She was very good to me and did not scold me when I could not understand what was said or when I made mistakes. I found that my master's name was Naaman.

I soon found that, although he was a great man and a favourite of the king, he was not happy, and that my mistress was not happy either. Then I found out what the trouble was. Naaman was a leper. I felt very sorry for him, and for my mistress.

Then one day when I was waiting on my mistress, I told her about the prophet of God, named Elisha, in my country about whom my father had often told me. I remembered

that my father had told me that he could cure leprosy. So I said to my mistress, 'In the country that I come from there is a man who can cure leprosy'. My mistress looked surprised. 'How can that be?' she said. 'No one can cure leprosy.' But I said, 'I know this man can cure it, because my father told me that he had done so.' But my mistress only shook her head sadly. 'That is impossible,' she said.

But one of the other servants who had been there when we were talking told Naaman what I had said. He called me and asked me what I had said. I told him that there was a man in Samaria who could cure leprosy. He too shook his head and murmured that it was impossible. But I said that I knew this man could do it.

The next thing I knew was that my master was going off to Samaria. I heard that the king was sending him. I was very glad, for I knew that he would be cured of his disease. But my mistress thought that it was foolishness.

Many days passed, and then one day there were loud cries outside the door of our house. Naaman came in, and how happy he looked. He went straight to my mistress and said, 'I have been cured'. She could hardly believe her ears. Then they both called me and told me how thankful they were for what I had done for him. 'As soon as suitable arrangements can be made we will set you free,' they said, 'and send you back to your own country.'

## THE STORY OF THE CAPTIVE MAID AS TOLD BY NAAMAN

One day I was passing through the main bazaar of Damascus, when I saw a group of captives from the country of Palestine, which had been brought in by a raiding party. Among them was a little girl who attracted me very much. My wife needed a maid to wait on her, so I bargained with the man who had captured this girl, and bought her from

him. He was not altogether pleased about it, but the girl would be better off with me than she would be with him.

I took her home with me and gave her to my wife. She was quick and intelligent and cheerful. It took her a while to settle down in the strange surroundings, so different from her little village, and of course she did not know the language. But she picked things up very quickly, and was soon able to chatter away to her mistress and to the other servants. She was soon a favourite with every one in the house. My wife was very pleased with her, and often used to talk to her about her village home.

One day one of the servants came to me with a strange story. She said that the little Hebrew said that there was a prophet in her country who could cure leprosy, the disease which took all the joy out of my life. I just laughed, as every one knew that leprosy was incurable. But the servant was insistent and said that the little girl seemed quite sure that this prophet had actually cured people of leprosy.

So I sent for the little maid and asked what she had told her mistress about a man who could cure leprosy. She, said, 'There is a man in my country who can cure leprosy, and if you were in Samaria, you could be cured.' How do you know?' I asked. 'My father told me about it,' she answered. Then I sent her away. It seemed just to be a tale to me.

However, the next time I was in attendance on the King I told him what my wife's slave girl had said. 'But,' I added, 'of course, it is quite impossible.' Rather to my surprise, the king took it seriously. 'You must go and find out anyway,' he said. 'You should take any chance of getting rid of this disease.' So he sent me off to Samaria with a letter to the king of Israel.

Eventually I found the prophet of whom my little captive maid had spoken, and although at first I did not think much of him, I finally did what he told me to do, and found

I was cured. You can imagine my happiness at getting rid of that terrible disease, and my thankfulness to the little Hebrew girl. I got back to Damascus as quickly as I could, and gave my wife the good news. I then started to make arrangements to set our little slave girl free, and to send her back to her own country.

The following are examples of how Old Testament stories may be adapted and expanded to suit small children.

### THE GIANT KILLER

It now happened that the Israelites, the people over whom Saul ruled, began to fight a people called the Philistines. Saul led his army out to fight, so David went back to his home and to his flocks. Three of his brothers went to join Saul's army, to help in the fight against the Philistines. David would very much have liked to have gone with them. But he was only a boy, and too young. So he had to stay at home. 'You are not nearly old enough nor big enough', his brothers said to him, 'to think of fighting. That is work for men. You are only a boy. You must stay at home and help to look after the flocks and herds'.

'Do you not remember', answered David, 'how I killed the lion and the bear, with the help of my sling? How can you say that I am not strong enough to fight?'

But his brothers only laughed. 'Men do not fight with slings,' they said. 'Slings are only playthings for boys. Men use swords and spears, which are too heavy for you to lift even, much less to use in fighting. You take your sling and go and look after the sheep.'

So the three brothers went away to the war and David was left, feeling very downcast, to practise again with his sling. 'Some day', he promised himself, 'I will show them what I can do'.

Many days passed and there was no news from the brothers. At last their old father, Jesse, got anxious. He wanted to hear what was happening, and what his sons were doing. So one day he called David and said to him, 'Go to the camp where your brothers are, and see how they are getting on. Take some corn for them and also these ten loaves, for they may be short of food. And take these ten cheeses also for their officer. And bring me word again how they are getting on.'

David was only too eager to go, and in no time he had made all his arrangements. The next day, early in the morning, leaving a keeper with his sheep, David took the corn and the bread and the cheeses, and his precious sling, and set off for where the fighting was going on.

The Israelites were on a hill on the one side of a valley, and the army of the Philistines was on a hill on the other side of the valley. Through the middle of the valley a little stream flowed.

When David got near the armies he heard a lot of shouting, but there did not seem to be any soldiers moving nor any fighting going on. He came into the camp of the Israelites, and found where his brothers were. He gave them the things he had brought from home, and the cheeses for their officer, and asked them how they were getting on and what was happening.

Now the Philistines had a champion fighter, who was called Goliath. He was a very tall and strong man. He was about ten feet high and he wore a coat of iron which weighed about 80 seers. The head of his spear weighed about 10 seers. He had a man to go in front of him carrying a heavy shield.

This giant used to come out in front of the army of the Philistines every day, walk down into the valley between the two armies, and used to shout out to the Israelites, 'Send out some one to fight me. If he can kill me, then the Philistines will be your servants. But if I kill him, then

you shall be our servants and shall serve us. Are any of you brave enough to come out and fight me? Come on, if you are.'

Saul and the Israelites were very frightened when they saw this huge man. They had no one who was strong enough to fight him, so they kept inside their camp. No one had the courage to go out to fight Goliath. Every day Goliath shouted out his challenge, and as no one would come out to fight him, he began to laugh at the Israelites. 'You are all jackals,' he said. 'There is none of you who has any courage at all.'

While David was talking to his brothers, it so happened that Goliath came out as usual and began shouting and laughing at the Israelites in his terrible voice. David listened to what he was saying, and then began to ask what it all meant. His brothers told him what had been happening. Then David began to ask those who were standing round what would be done to the man who killed this giant. They told him that any man who did that would be richly rewarded by the king. Then as Goliath went on shouting his taunts at the Israelites, and no one would go near him, David said that it was a shameful thing that a Philistine should be allowed to go on talking like that. 'Why does no one fight him?' he asked.

When David's brothers heard him talking in this way, they got angry with him. 'Who are you to talk like that?' they asked. 'What do you mean coming here when you should be looking after those sheep of yours? Who are you to find fault with your betters?' David answered, 'I am not finding fault, but that man should not be allowed to go on like that.'

'We know why you have left your few sheep in the wilderness and come here,' said his brothers. 'It is just because you want to push in where you have no business, and to see what is going on. You think too much of

yourself, you and your lion and your bear. Get away off back to your sheep.'

But David was not going back to his sheep. He simply said to his brothers that he had done nothing wrong, and went on talking to others about Goliath, and how it was a shame that no one went out to fight him. He wondered if he would be allowed to fight Goliath.

At last someone told Saul that there was a young man in camp who seemed to want to go out to be killed by Goliath. Saul called David to him. Then David told Saul that he was prepared to fight the giant. But Saul said, 'How can you? You are only a boy. You know nothing about fighting. He has been trained to fight from the time he was a boy. You have had no experience of war or fighting. You will just be killed straight away.'

But David then told Saul how he had killed the lion and the bear. 'I am sure', he said, 'that God, Who helped me to kill them, will also help me to kill this Philistine. Only let me try.'

So Saul, although he thought it was not right, said that David could go out to fight Goliath. 'But', he said, 'you must take my armour and my sword'.

So David put on Saul's armour and his helmet and tried to take up his sword. But they had been made for a strong man, not for a boy, and David found that with them on he could hardly move, much less fight anyone. So he took off the armour and the helmet and put down the sword, and said that he would go out just as he was with just his sling in his hand. He was going to use the same plan that had been so successful with the lion and the bear. His brothers would see what the sling that they laughed at could do.

So now a shout went up from the Israelites that they were sending out a man to fight Goliath. Goliath came forward eagerly out of the Philistine camp. His shield bearer went in front of him. But when Goliath saw David

coming down the hill on the other side of the valley he was very angry.

'What is this?' he cried. 'Do you take me for a dog, that you send out a young boy carrying a staff, to fight me.' And Goliath called down curses on David. Then he called out, 'All right, since you want to be killed, come on and get it over. The birds and the animals will pick your bones this day.'

But David answered, 'You are very proud of your strength and your height and your armour and your spear and your sword. But big and strong as you are it is *your* bones that will be picked by the birds and the animals this day. You and your people will learn that our God will save us.'

Goliath had been so busy talking about what he was going to do that he had paid no attention to what David was doing. He picked up five smooth stones from the bed of the stream in the bottom of the valley and put them in his shepherd's bag. Then he crossed the stream and ran forward to meet Goliath. Then, suddenly, before Goliath could get near enough to use his spear or his sword, David put his hand into his bag, took out a stone, fitted it into his sling, and, before Goliath knew what he was doing, David had slung the stone with all his might. Now all David's practice with his beloved sling stood him in good stead. Straight to the mark flew the stone, flung with all the young shepherd's strength and skill. Goliath saw the stone coming, put up a hand to try to stop it, but in vain. The stone hit him fair and square on the forehead. Such was the force with which it had been thrown, that it sank right into the giant's huge head. Goliath staggered, and then fell full length to the ground on his face.

He was probably dead, but in order to make quite sure, David at once ran forward, took up Goliath's own sword, and with the sword cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, so unexpectedly, they became filled with terror and started to run away. At

once the Israelites poured out of their camp after them, and that day, owing to the victory of the shepherd boy with his sling and his faith in God, they won a great victory over the Philistines. But David never went back to his sheep again. He now had other work to do.

### THE SPOILT BOY

Once upon a time there was a man named Jacob who had ten sons and one daughter. Jacob was living in the country that we now call Iraq, and he was working for his uncle, named Laban. Jacob had worked for his uncle for many years, looking after his flocks of sheep, and his herds of goats and cattle. Laban was a rich man, and Jacob, too, became rich.

One day a little baby boy was born to Jacob. This was his eleventh son. Jacob and the baby's mother, Rachel, called the baby, Joseph. Joseph was a good deal younger than his ten brothers, and was especially dear to Jacob and Rachel. But everyone had been glad when the new baby came, and his grandfather, Laban (for Rachel was Laban's daughter), was very proud of his fine new grandson. All Jacob's sons came crowding into the tent to see their new brother, and Joseph's sister, Dinah, used to carry him round and look after him whenever she could. She thought he was the nicest baby she had ever seen.

So Joseph grew up into a small boy. His home was a shepherd's large black tent. He played among the wild flowers, and on the grass where the sheep and cattle used to graze. Every day he used to see the sheep and goats taken out to graze, and sometimes he used to wonder what lay beyond the hills and valleys where they all lived. His father told him of another country where he would go some day. This was the country where Jacob had been born, and where his old father lived. Joseph longed eagerly for the day when they would go to this country of which Jacob told him such wonderful stories.

Then one day Joseph saw that there was a great deal of bustle and excitement. All the sheep and the goats and the cattle were collected and driven off. The tents were packed up. Joseph and his mother got on to a camel, and everyone set off. At last they were going to the country about which Jacob had so often told his little son. Joseph wanted to say good-bye to his grandfather, but Jacob said they must hurry away. On and on they travelled. At last they came to a big river which they had to cross. This was the river Euphrates. Joseph had never seen anything like this river before, and he was frightened when he had to get into a little round boat to cross it. But his mother was with him, and they got safely across. Then they went on again, but they travelled slowly because of all the flocks and herds that they had with them. Joseph's brothers used to help to drive the animals along, but Joseph was only seven years old, so he stayed with his mother.

One day they saw some riders on camels coming swiftly after them. As the camels came nearer, they saw that on them were Joseph's grandfather, Laban, and a lot of his men. Jacob had gone away from Laban and his country without telling him that he was going, as he was afraid that Laban would not let him go. And Jacob very much wanted to go back to his own country where he had been born to see his old father again.

But Laban was angry with him for running away and came after him. Laban was especially angry because, when Jacob left, Rachel, Joseph's mother, had stolen some images out of Laban's house, and had taken them away with her. Jacob did not know anything about this, but Laban thought that Jacob had stolen the images.

So when Laban caught up with Jacob and his family and flocks, there was a quarrel between the two men. Voices were raised, and men on each side began to shout at one another. Joseph did not know what was going to happen, and he began to cry and to catch hold of his

mother's dress. At last Jacob said to Laban, 'Well, you can look anywhere you like for your images, and if anyone here is found with them, that person will be put to death.' For Jacob did not know that Joseph's mother had them.

When Rachel heard Jacob say this, she went away to her tent, and, collecting the images, sat on them, so that they could not be seen. Laban and his men searched everywhere for the images but could find none. Laban himself looked through Rachel's tent. She asked him to excuse her getting up, as she was not well. Laban never thought that she was sitting on the images he was looking for, and finding nothing in the tent, he went out. He had to tell Jacob that he could find nothing.

Jacob was very angry and so was Laban. The quarrel got worse, but both men were sensible enough not to fight, and at last they made peace, and became friendly again. Laban went back to his own country, and Jacob went on to where his father lived.

As they got nearer to where Jacob's home had been when he was a boy, in the country we now call Palestine, Joseph noticed that his father and mother seemed to be worried and anxious. He heard his father talking to his mother about his father's brother, named Esau. Joseph could not understand what was 'wrong, but he knew that his father was frightened. Long ago, more than twenty years before this, Jacob had wronged his brother, and had run away from home to save himself from the punishment his brother would have given him. That was why he had been living in Iraq. Now Jacob began to wonder if his brother Esau would punish him for what he had done years before. Esau was a great hunter and fighter, a strong man, and he could have easily killed Jacob and taken everything he had.

Now Jacob heard that Esau was coming with a band of men to meet him. Was he coming in peace or in anger? This was what was worrying Joseph's father and mother.

One day Joseph saw that a lot of goats and sheep and camels and cows and bulls and asses were being sorted out from among Jacob's animals. All the best ones were sorted out, and they were sent on ahead. Jacob and his family, and the rest of the animals, waited where they were. These good animals were a present for Esau. Then Jacob put Rachel and Joseph at the very back, in case Esau should make an attack, and went slowly forward. Soon Esau and four hundred men appeared, riding swiftly on camels. Joseph clung to his mother, 'Were they all going to be killed?' he wondered. But Jacob went forward bowing seven times to the ground when he got near Esau. He was very afraid.

But Esau had forgotten all about the wrong that Jacob had done. He was very pleased to see Jacob, put his arms round him, and wept with joy to see him again. Then Jacob brought forward all his family. Rachel and Joseph were brought to Esau. They bowed before him. Joseph liked this big tall man with his hearty laugh, though he did seem a bit rough. Esau wanted to know what all the animals, that he had met, were for. Jacob said that they were a present. Esau did not want to take them, but Jacob insisted, and so Esau accepted the present. Then after a short while, Esau and his men rode away, and Jacob and his family and his flocks and herds continued their slow journey towards Jacob's home. And now everyone was happy, and no longer afraid.

For some years Jacob and his family moved slowly about. They were now in the land of Palestine about which Joseph had heard so much and so often from his father. As he grew up, Joseph learned about how to look after the flocks and herds. His brothers were now grown up, and they used to go out everyday. Reuben, the eldest, who liked Joseph more than the others did, used to show Joseph how to use a sling, and taught him all the things that a shepherd must know. So the summers and winters

passed by, till Joseph was a sturdy boy of twelve. Then two things happened.

Joseph's mother, Rachel, had another little son. He was called Benjamin. Joseph was very interested in the little new baby, but his happiness was changed to sorrow because his beloved mother was ill and got worse and worse. He could see that his father Jacob was desperately anxious. And then one day Joseph's mother died. Joseph knelt by the bedside and cried and cried. He was led away, but could not be comforted.

Jacob had loved Rachel very dearly, and now all his love was given to Joseph and Benjamin. But he loved Joseph more than any of his sons. Jacob was very clever in some things, but he was very foolish in the way in which he showed so plainly that Joseph was his favourite son. He made Joseph proud and conceited, and Jacob's treatment of Joseph made most of his other brothers jealous of him. Thus there grew up a spirit of hatred in the family which meant that some day there was going to be trouble.

Unfortunately Joseph began to think that he was better than his brothers. Jacob, his father, was really to blame for this. He gave Joseph whatever he wanted. He could never bring himself to reprove Joseph when he did anything that he should not have done, and Joseph soon began to make himself more and more disliked by his brothers. He put on airs, and showed them that he thought he was better than they were. His father did not let him go out as a shepherd, but kept him at home all the time. This made the brothers more angry than ever. They could not see why Joseph should not work with the flocks and herds just as they did.

One day Joseph saw some of his brothers doing something that they should not have been doing. He at once went and told his father about what they had been doing. No one likes a tell-tale, and this only made Joseph's older brothers hate him more and more. But his foolish father

made matters worse, by giving him a splendid coat of many colours, which showed that Jacob had chosen Joseph to be his heir. Naturally this made the older brothers hate Joseph worse than ever. They felt that it was unfair and unjust of Jacob to make the youngest of them all, except for Benjamin, the master of all when the father died. But Reuben, although he was the oldest, and should have felt most hatred for Joseph, as it was his place that Joseph had taken, still loved Joseph and did not share the feelings of the other brothers.

One day Joseph told them all a dream that he had had. He said that he had dreamt that they were all binding sheaves in the fields. Suddenly Joseph's sheaf stood upright and the sheaves of all the brothers bowed down to it. The brothers were very angry when foolish Joseph proudly told them his dream. 'What!' they shouted, 'do you think that you are going to be our master? We shall see about that.' And they hated him still more.

Then Joseph had another dream. He had learnt no sense in the meantime, and again proudly told his dream. This time he dreamt that the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. He told this dream to his brothers and then to his father. But this was a bit too much even for Jacob, and he rebuked Joseph for his pride. But all the same, he remembered the dream.

Things did not get any better in the family. The brothers scornfully called Joseph 'The Dreamer'. Their envy and hatred grew worse and worse. Then one day came what is always the result of such feelings. The brothers were a good distance from the home encampment, and had been away for some time. Jacob began to worry lest something had happened to them and to the flocks. So, calling Joseph, he told him to set out to try and find his brothers, and bring word back to Jacob about them.

So Joseph set out. The brothers were not where Joseph had thought they would be, but a man told him where they

had gone to. So Joseph went on further to find them. The brothers saw him coming. 'Hullo,' they said. 'Here is the Dreamer. Now is our chance to put an end to his dreams and his airs. We will see what becomes of this father's darling. No one will know what has happened to him if we kill him. We can tell our father that some wild animal must have got him.'

But Reuben tried to save Joseph. 'No,' he said. 'Don't kill him. Let us put him in this empty well. Then if he dies we will have done the killing.' He said this because he thought that later, when he had a chance, he would come back and rescue Joseph. The brothers did not know of his plan, but they agreed to what he suggested. As soon as Joseph came up to where the brothers were, they seized him roughly, tore off his splendid coat of many colours, and dragged him over to the empty well. Joseph cried for mercy, but they paid no attention to him. 'You can dream some more dreams,' they said, 'and see what that does for you.' So they put him down the empty well.

Then the brothers sat down to have a meal. Reuben had gone away for a while. Just then a party of merchants passed on their way to Egypt. One of the brothers, Judan, suddenly had an idea. He said, 'Let us not kill this dreamer. Let us sell him to these merchants. They will take him to Egypt as a slave, and that will be the last we shall see of him.' The others agreed and Joseph was at once drawn up out of the well. At first he thought that his brothers were going to let him go, but he soon saw his mistake. He saw the merchants pay the brothers some money, and then, in spite of all his pleadings, he was dragged away as a slave. And so he was taken far away from home and his loving father into the land of Egypt.

But he had learnt his lesson. And in the book of Genesis you can read about all that happened to Joseph in Egypt when he grew up, and now God helped him to become a good and great man. But the cruel brothers dipped his

coat in the blood of a goat, and showed it to Jacob. And Jacob mourned for his favourite son, whom, he was sure, some wild animal had devoured. It was not till many years later that Jacob found out that Joseph was alive, and once again meeting him, in all his splendour in Egypt, saw how Joseph's dreams came true.

### THE BABY IN THE BASKET

For many years after Joseph, about whom you have heard, had died, his grand-children and great grand-children, and their great grand-children lived in the country called Egypt. As the years went by, there came to be a large number of them. At first the people of Egypt were quite glad to have them living in their country. But as the years went by and all those who had known Joseph and his brothers or had heard of them, had died, and as the numbers of the Hebrews, as they were called, got more and more, the people of Egypt began to be afraid of them. They thought that perhaps the Hebrews might help the enemies of the Egyptians. There were so many of them that, if they quarrelled with the Egyptians, they could be very dangerous.

So the Egyptians began to treat the Hebrews very cruelly. They made them work hard for long hours everyday in the hot sun. They set men over them who beat them when they did not do enough work. In fact they made slaves of the poor Hebrews. But in spite of all that was done to them, the Hebrews kept up their courage, and their numbers still went on increasing. Then the king of Egypt gave a very cruel order. He said that whenever a boy baby was born in a Hebrew family, he was to be killed. Any Egyptian, who knew of the birth of a baby boy in a Hebrew family, was to throw the baby into the river Nile. Not all Egyptians obeyed this order, but, all the same, a great many baby boys were killed, and there were a great many sorrowing fathers and mothers among the Hebrews.

One day a Hebrew mother had a baby boy. She could not bear to have her beautiful baby thrown into the river Nile. So she managed to keep it a secret that she had had a baby boy. She hoped that in some way or other she would be able to save her baby. She did her best to keep him from crying, lest anyone passing by should know that there was a baby in the house. Either she or the baby's sister was always on the watch, ready to hide the baby if anyone should be seen coming towards the house. So they went on for three months, and for three months they managed to keep the baby hidden. But as the days went by, it became more and more difficult to do so. As the baby grew he could not be kept quiet. At last the mother saw that very soon her secret would be discovered. She did not know what to do.

She thought and thought of some way to save her baby. At last she decided on a plan. She told Miriam, the baby's elder sister, to go and get some of the long grass that grew on the banks of the river. Miriam brought the long stalks, and her mother then wove them into a big basket. She filled in the spaces between the stalks of grass with a kind of asphalt that the Egyptians got from the Dead Sea and with a kind of mud. Then when this had dried, a basket, that was like a little boat, was ready. Miriam watched what her mother was doing and wondered what the basket was for.

When it was ready, her mother said to her,

'You know the place on the river where the princess, the daughter of the king, comes to bathe?' Miriam said, 'Yes. I know the place. She was there the day before yesterday.'

'Well,' said her mother. 'I am going to put your baby brother into this basket, and you are to take him in the basket and float him out among the reeds near the bank of the river as close to the place where the princess bathes as you can. Perhaps the princess will see him and have pity

on him. They say that she is kind. When you have put the basket in the river, hide nearby and see what happens, and then come and tell me. I will stay here and pray to God to save him.'

So the baby was put into the basket. He was asleep. Miriam took up the basket with her baby brother in it and went off down to the river. She passed people on the road, but she had the basket on her head, and luckily the baby still slept, so no one guessed what was in the basket.

When she got to the bank of the river, she pushed the basket out on the water among the reeds close to the bathing place of the princess. Then she went a little distance away, and hid herself where she could see what happened.

After she had been waiting for some time she heard voices, and then she saw the princess with her maidens coming down to the river. They walked along the river bank for a little way. Suddenly the princess saw the basket floating out among the reeds. 'I wonder what is in that basket', she said to her maids. 'Go and bring it in and let us see what is in it.'

So one of the maids went out into the water and brought in the basket. She brought it to the princess who took off the lid. The baby was awake by now, and when the lid of the basket was taken off, and he saw strange faces looking at him he got frightened and began to cry.

When the princess saw the beautiful baby, and heard him crying she was filled with pity. She understood what the trouble was. 'This must be a Hebrew baby', she said to her maids. They agreed with her that it must be.

While they were looking at the baby, Miriam came up as though she had just happened to be passing. When she saw that the princess was so sorry for the baby she said to her, 'Would you like me to go and get a nurse for him from among the Hebrew women?'

The Princess answered, 'Yes. That is a good idea. I am not going to let this baby be killed in spite of all my father says. You go and get a nurse for him, and he shall be in my care.'

So Miriam ran away as fast as her legs could carry her, and reached home in a short time. Her mother was waiting for her. Miriam was so excited that she could hardly get her story out. 'The princess has taken him out of the river, and she has sent me to find a nurse for him. She says that she is not going to let him be killed. She wants a nurse to look after him for her.'

Her mother did not wait to hear more but the two of them ran back to the river. Miriam came up to the princess, who was playing with the baby. 'Here is a woman who can nurse the baby for you,' she said. Miriam's mother said nothing.

The Princess said to her. 'If you look after him, and nurse him, I will pay you for your work. The child will be in my care.'

Perhaps the princess suspected something when she saw the look on the mother's face, but she said nothing, so Miriam and her mother went home with the baby. Now there was no need to hide him. They did not need to be afraid of anyone knowing that there was a baby in the house. He was a baby belonging to the daughter of the king, and no one could do anything to him. So Miriam and her mother thanked God for His goodness to them, and there was happiness in their home.

For some years the baby remained in the home until he was growing up into a fine boy. Then the daughter of the king took him to live in the king's palace. She gave him a name, and the name she gave him was Moses. She treated Moses as her son, and as he grew up he had the best of everything that Egypt could give him, until one day when he was grown up he went back to his people and helped

them to escape from the power of the Egyptian people. But that is another story.

## THE TEMPLE BOY

Once upon a time there was a woman named Hannah. She had no children, which made her very sad, as she very much wanted to have a little son. She prayed to God everyday to give her a son, but still she had none, and became sadder and sadder. She continually wept, and refused to eat any food. Her husband, Elkanah, tried to cheer her up. 'I love you as much as ten sons could do,' he said. But she would not be comforted.

One day she had gone to a place called Shiloh where the Jews of those days used to gather to pray to God and to worship Him. There Hannah was praying earnestly that God would give her a son. She was not praying out loud, but her lips were moving. The priest who was in charge of the temple at Shiloh, whose name was Eli, looked at her and wondered what was wrong with her. She was behaving so strangely that he thought she must be drunk. Thinking this, he said to her sternly that she should not come to the house of God in such a condition, and told her to go away. But she told him that she was not drunk. She told him all her trouble, and how much she wanted a son. Then Eli told her to go in peace, and that God would give her a son.

Now some time later Hannah had a little baby boy. She called him Samuel, which meant that he had come as an answer to her prayer to God. When Hannah had prayed to God to let her have a son, she had promised God that she would give her son to the service of God. Both she and Elkanah agreed now that they must do as they had promised. While Samuel was very small, his mother kept him with her. But as soon as he was old enough to be separated from her, she set off with him for Shiloh.

When she got to Shiloh she met the old priest Eli. He did not remember her. So she told him that she was the woman whom he had thought to be drunk and that God had answered her prayer. 'This is my little son,' she said, showing Samuel to Eli. 'I promised God that when I had a son I would give him to God for His service. So I have brought Samuel to you now that he is old enough to leave me, and I want you to take charge of him and bring him up to serve God.'

So Eli took charge of Samuel and Hannah went back to her home. Samuel began to help Eli with the work of the temple. He used to help him to clean it, to look after the lamps and clean them, to open the doors in the morning and shut them in the evening. He did the small jobs that a small boy could do. Once a year, Samuel's mother came to see him. Each year she brought him a new coat. Each year she was very happy when she saw how her son was growing, and how much of the temple work he was learning to do. Eli was getting to be an old man, and he came to depend more and more on Samuel to see that all that had to be done in the temple was done properly. Eli's own sons were bad men, and he got no help from them. So Samuel came to be like a son to him.

Eli's sons grew worse and worse. They used to take the things the people brought to the temple to sacrifice to God, so that people became afraid to go there. People spoke to Eli about his sons and their evil conduct, and he tried to stop them. But they paid no attention to him. Eli was old and weak, and did not seem able to do anything to stop the evil-doing of his sons. It grieved him, but he did nothing. But Samuel, who was growing up, was loved by everyone, and was gradually becoming a true servant of God.

One night, after all the temple work was done, and Eli and Samuel had gone to bed, Samuel thought he heard a voice calling him saying, 'Samuel, Samuel.' He thought it

must be Eli calling him, and at once ran to Eli to see what he wanted. But Eli told him that he had not called him, and told him to lie down again and go to sleep.

Again Samuel thought he heard a voice calling him, saying, 'Samuel, Samuel.' Again he ran to Eli and asked him what he had called him for.

But Eli answered, 'I did not call you. Go back to bed, and go to sleep.' So Samuel went back to bed again.

Again Samuel thought he heard the voice, saying, 'Samuel, Samuel.' Up he jumped from bed and again ran to Eli, telling him that he had again heard Eli calling him. Again Eli said that he had not called him. But Eli began to wonder what was happening. Eli was not calling Samuel, but Samuel certainly seemed to be hearing a voice calling him. Perhaps God was speaking to him. So this time Eli said to Samuel, 'Go back to bed and lie down again and go to sleep. But if you hear a voice calling you again, answer, "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth".'

So Samuel went back to bed and lay down again. Sure enough the voice came again saying, 'Samuel, Samuel.' This time Samuel did not jump up and run to Eli. He answered, 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

Then God gave Samuel a message for Eli. It was a terrible message to take to the old man, whom Samuel loved, and who had looked after him like a father. For it was a message to tell Eli that his two wicked sons were going to be punished by God and that Eli too, was to share in the punishment, because he had not stopped their wickedness.

Then at last Samuel went to sleep.

In the morning Samuel got up as usual and went about his work. But he said not a word to Eli about what had happened in the night. He was too frightened to give him the message he had been given, and in any case he loved Eli too much to want to give him any such message.

But Eli wanted to know if anything had happened after the last time he had sent Samuel back to bed. So he called Samuel to him, and asked him what God had told him. Samuel at first did not want to say anything. But Eli said that he must tell him everything. So then Samuel gave Eli the terrible message that God had given him for Eli. And Eli said, 'It is the Lord's will. Let Him do what seemeth Him good.'

And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.

## THE STUDY OF A BIOGRAPHY

This approach is peculiarly suitable for children of ages of about nine to twelve and thirteen. This is the age of hero worship, and Old Testament characters can be presented as heroes of the faith. But there are at least three stages in presenting biographies, one leading up to the other. In the first stage we will present the biography as little more than a series of stories all dealing with the life of one particular person. There will be little attempt to present a real biography. This stage will naturally follow on from the purely story stage. In the second stage a more complete study of the life is undertaken, and an attempt made to cover the whole of the Biblical material, with some analysis of the contribution of the person whose life is being studied; of his successes and failures, and of the reasons for these. A beginning of practical application of the lessons learned from the life can also be made. In the third stage, which may be continued on beyond the ages of 12 and 13, a systematic study of the life is made, with a more detailed analysis of the work and contribution of the person. The ages given are, of course, not meant to be arbitrary. The teacher will vary his method with the ability and development of his particular pupils, and one stage will gradually merge into another.

Even in the purely story stage of dealing with a life, the teacher will probably find that it is necessary to make definite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of various actions of the person whose life is being studied. Pupils of this age are, even at the beginning of the period,

becoming more critical and will compare with the teaching of Jesus, the actions of the hero. Such comparisons and criticisms are always to be welcomed. But the teacher must always be careful to make clear that it is not fair to judge Old Testament characters by our present standards, formed in the light of the life of Christ. They must be judged according to the light of their times. At the same time we must avoid the pitfall of thinking that we must at all costs 'whitewash' these characters. When they did wrong, there should be no hesitation in pointing it out. We should never attempt to present such men as Jacob and Joseph and Moses as perfect and without weaknesses. The object of the teacher in all three stages should be to present a human life, with all its triumphs as well as its failures, and to show how even the weakest of characters, such as Samson, could be used by God.

The following are suggestions of how biography can be dealt with in the first stage. It must be remembered that, even in this stage, it is necessary to give some elementary information about the background of the character who is being studied. The stories will not be as well understood, nor as interesting, if this is not done. What is given about the times and conditions of life of the character will not be detailed or extensive, but sufficient should be given to ensure that the stories have their proper setting. At this stage an extensive use of simple dramatics should be made. Most of the stories can be easily dramatized, and there is no surer way of arousing interest in the Indian boy or girl.

1. *Abraham, a Hero of Faith.*

Introduction:

Conditions of life in Mesopotamia and Canaan.

The life of nomads, their conditions and way of living.

A map of Mesopotamia and Canaan should be drawn, and Abraham's journey marked, also the positions of places mentioned in the stories.

- (1) The story of Abraham's call and of his obedience to God. (Genesis 12.)

Stories of others who have gone forth to strange countries may also be told, e.g. Carey, Augustine (to Britain).

- (2) The story of the quarrel between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot bringing out Abraham's unselfishness. (Genesis 13.)
- (3) The story of Abraham's rescue of Lot, bringing out Abraham's bravery, and his generosity over the spoil. (Genesis 14.)
- (4) The story of Isaac and Ishmael, bringing the evil effects of jealousy. (Genesis 21.)
- (5) The story of Rebekah.

## 2. *Jacob, the Deceiver.*

### Introduction:

The pupils will already have the information about conditions which is necessary. The same map may also be used.

- (1) The story of Jacob and Esau, bringing out Jacob's cunning in taking advantage of his brother's necessity in the first place, and his deceit over the blessing.
- (2) The story of Jacob's flight and his dream.
- (3) The story of his meeting with Rachel and his stay with Laban.
- (4) The story of his flight from Laban.
- (5) The story of his meeting with Esau, bringing out the effect of a guilty conscience.

## 3. *Joseph, the Ruler.*

Introduction as before, with some information added about Egypt. A map of Canaan and Egypt should be drawn.

- (1) Joseph and his brothers in the home. The story of the dreams.

Bring out Joseph's faults in his relations with his brothers.

- (2) Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers.
- (3) Joseph in Egypt and his experiences in prison.  
Bring out his conscientiousness.
- (4) The story of Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's interpretation.
- (5) The story of Joseph's rise to power.
- (6) The story of the coming of Joseph's brothers to Egypt and of Joseph's dealings with them.
- (7) The story of Joseph's meeting with his father Jacob, and of the settling in Egypt.

#### 4. *Daniel, the Stedfast.*

##### Introduction:

Some information about how the Hebrews came to be in Babylon and about the conditions of life there.

- (1) The story of Daniel and the king's meat, bringing out Daniel's loyalty to God and his convictions.
- (2) The story of Daniel and the king's dream, bringing out Daniel's dependence on God.
- (3) The story of Daniel's friends and the fiery furnace, bringing out again loyalty to God.
- (4) The story of Belshazzar's feast.
- (5) The story of Daniel and the lions' den, bringing out again loyalty to God and to conviction.

Lives that can be dealt with in this way are Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, Gideon, Samson, Daniel.

In the second stage, we can use a method of biographical study which is suitable either for private study or for class work. This is to make out assignments, giving the readings from the Old Testament which will give all the information there is about the person whose life is being studied. These readings will be daily readings, and there will be short comments on each reading, with suggestive questions, to

guide the thoughts of the pupil as he reads and thinks about what he is reading. By the time these readings have been worked through, the whole life will have been covered. Readings will be given in the assignment for each day of the week except Sunday. For Sunday, questions are given for the consideration of the pupil himself, or for discussion in a group meeting.

Before any particular life is commenced, pupils, if working by themselves, can be called together, and any information by way of introduction which is considered necessary may be given. Or such information may be given at the beginning of the assignment. It is probably better for such introductory information to be given by the teacher or Boarding Superintendent.

The following is an example of such an assignment:—

## THE FARMER WHO SAVED HIS PEOPLE

### *First Week.*

As you read about Gideon watch for changes that you can find taking place in his life. When you find a change, write down what it is in your note-book. Write down also the reason for the change if you can find it. When you see the reason for the success of Gideon write that down also. Note down various qualities of character as you find them.

**First Day.** Read Judges 6 : 1-10.

This shows you the condition of the Hebrews and in the ninth and tenth verses we have the author's reason for their trouble. What was that?

**Second Day.** Read Judges 6 : 11-24.

These verses tell us about the call of Gideon. Was he prepared for the call? What sort of spirit does he show in verse 13?

Was Gideon really a mighty man of valour? If not, why did the angel call him one?

**Third Day.** Read Judges 6 : 25-32.

Notice how action followed the call and the sign. Can we see here one of the causes of Gideon's success? He was a man of action who carried out the task that was at hand to be done. He knew too that his nation could not be successful if their allegiance was divided between Jehovah and Baal. They had to be purified. Compare this with the teaching of Mr. Gandhi. Is there a lesson here for us today?

**Fourth Day.** Read Judges 6 : 33-40.

Had Gideon a strong faith in God? Was he naturally timid or only cautious. Read chapter 7 : 9-15 when he again seems to be in doubt or fear.

Does faith in God or a cause come suddenly or is it a slow process?

**Fifth Day.** Read Judges 7 : 1-8.

Compare Gideon on the eve of his campaign against the Midianites, with the Gideon we saw threshing wheat in hiding. What is the difference and what has caused it?

Why did Gideon reduce his force so drastically? Would you have been inclined to do so if you had been in his place?

**Sixth Day.** Read Judges 7 : 15-25.

What quality did Gideon show in making and carrying out his plan of battle?

**Seventh Day.** Questions for consideration or discussion.

1. Did Gideon's desire for signs show a weakness in his character?
2. Do you know any other Bible character who made objections when God's call came to him? (See Exodus, chapter 4.)

*Second Week.*

**First Day.** Read Judges 8 : 1-3.

What quality of character does Gideon show in his dealings with the men of Ephraim? Was he acting from real humility or from policy?

**Second Day.** Read Judges 8 : 4-17.

Compare Gideon's treatment of Succoth and Penue! with his treatment of Ephraim. Why the difference? What does his treatment of the former show about his character?

**Third Day.** Read Judges 8 : 18-21.

This shows us that the blood feud had a big influence on Gideon. He was evidently actuated by a desire for revenge for the death of his brothers. What light does this throw on his character? Where else does he show a desire for revenge?

**Fourth Day.** Read Judges 8 : 22-28.

Can we see here the mistake that Gideon made? His attitude in verses 22, 23 was very good. Why did he make this mistake?

**Fifth Day.** Read Judges 8 : 29-35.

Does this teach us how short-lived is anything we gain by force? The effect of Gideon's fighting on the religious life of the people was very temporary.

**Sixth Day.** Where else in the Bible is Gideon mentioned?

Read Hebrews 11 : 32-34. How did Gideon show faith?

**Seventh Day.** Questions for consideration or discussion.

1. What was Gideon's real motive in undertaking the work of freeing his country? Did he have more than one motive?

2. What was the cause of his success?

3. What was the cause of his weakness?

Lives which can be dealt with in this way are Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Daniel.

For those who are older, that is for ages 13 to 15, a more critical study of Biography may be undertaken. In dealing with biographies at this more advanced stage, the following course may be followed:—

1. The first step is to give the historical, social and religious background of the person in question. This means that the teacher will have to give a brief summary of the history of the times in which he lived, of the social conditions of those times, and of the stage of religious development which had been reached by the Hebrews. This does not need to be done in great detail, but is important, as it gives the right setting into which the character fits, and therefore is essential for a right understanding of his life and work.

2. Then follows the narrative of the events of the life in question. This can be worked out by pupils themselves from references to the Bible given by the teacher, or by means of an assignment, if assignments are being used. In some cases particular events may have to have special study and discussion, particularly where, as with the calling of Saul to the Kingship, and with Saul's first meeting with David, and with Joseph's being sold by the brothers, there are two different accounts of the same event. The reasons for such double accounts should be explained with reference to the way in which the books containing the accounts were compiled.

3. Following this, there should be a study of the character of the person whose life is being studied. Both weak points and strong points should be brought out, and pupils should always be encouraged to arrive at their own opinion with regard to the characteristics displayed, and to give their reasons for the conclusions they arrive at. The teacher should always keep before the minds of his pupils

the fact that there are two standards of judgment. We judge a person when we read of his actions by the standards we have learnt from Christ. But we must also estimate his character by the standards of the time in which he lived. We find here the importance of the introduction that has been given in the first stage of the study, as this enables pupils to arrive at a true estimate of the contribution and value of the person they are studying. Pupils should consider whether contemporary estimates (as for instance the 'wisdom' of Solomon) are really justified.

Particular care should be taken by the teacher when this stage of the work is being done, not to attempt to gloss over weaknesses and failures in the life of the 'hero'. There is sometimes an idea that everything that any character in the Bible does is right, and that it is irreverent to find fault or to criticize. But such an attitude builds up insincerity in the child, as it teaches him to reverse a judgment that he would naturally make in view of his upbringing, purely on a false idea of religious authority. Old Testament characters must be treated as men and women like any other men and women, with the weaknesses common to human nature. Their triumphs and the way in which God was able to use them will then stand out in all the brighter colours. Pupils should see if there is any single outstanding trait of character which, as it were, sums up the character of the person in question.

4. The next step is to estimate the religious beliefs of the character, his relationship with God, and particularly the way in which his religious beliefs influenced his life. In some cases it may be possible to trace out a religious development in the course of the life, and in the way in which God taught him, as in the case of Elijah. Pupils should be encouraged to make this estimate for themselves, giving chapter and verse for their conclusions. The work should never descend into a monologue by the teacher, with the children taking notes. The teacher should respect

the conclusions reached by his pupils, even though he thinks that they are wrong. He can give his own conclusions with his reasons, but should not try to force his own ideas on his pupils. Things they accept, simply because they think they have to agree with their teacher, are of little ultimate value to them. Questions of fact, of course, often have to be supplied by the teacher, especially in connection with the historical, social and religious background. But when it comes to drawing conclusions from the facts, then the teacher should consider himself simply as one of the group and allow freedom of thought and discussion, even if at times this seems to be shocking and irreverent. If it is sincere thought, and sincere seeking for truth, we can be sure it will never be shocking to God, however unorthodox it may seem to be, and no matter how current religious conventions and ideas may be questioned. (These considerations apply to all the work in the different sections, and not simply to this section on religious beliefs.)

5. The next stage is to try to determine the most important achievement of the character in Hebrew history and religion. This is more or less a summary of the life, and there may be many different opinions in the class as to what constituted the most important contribution of the person in question. All these should be accepted, and the teacher should give his own ideas with his reasons. He should also be careful not to accept any opinion from the class without reasons.

Allied with discussion on the most important achievement of the character is an attempt to estimate his influence on his contemporaries. This is not always possible, except by dealing in probabilities, for which pupils of this age will not, as a rule, have enough knowledge. But sometimes, as in the case of Moses, it is possible to make an estimate of the difference that the life of the character made to his people.

6. It is always interesting to get pupils to pick out the most outstanding and significant incident in a life. Again they should be required to give reasons for their choice, and the lesson or lesson they draw from the incident.

7. This leads to the final stage, that of deciding what the message of the character in question is for us today. Here again the teacher should try to get suggestions from his pupils rather than simply tell them what he thinks is the message. This may be done by discussion or by helping the thinking of the pupils by getting them to write answers to such questions as 'Does God call men now as He called Moses?' 'If Joseph had been your younger brother what would you have thought about him?' 'Can you name any modern Daniels in modern dens of lions?' 'Can you name some of the Goliaths we have to meet today?'

Considerable attention should be paid to this matter of determining these messages for today. It is as pupils realize that these Old Testament heroes have messages for us and for modern life, that they begin to realize the abiding significance and worth of the Old Testament, and how, in it, we find the voice of God speaking, not only to the times and men of which it is a record, but also to us and to our own day.

In dealing with a biography as has been suggested, there are a number of different methods which may be employed. At one time and for one stage one method will be suitable, and at another time in another stage a different method may be of use. We should use any and every method which will aid us in our aim of interesting our pupils in the word of God for them.

1. *Exposition.* There will be a certain amount of material which will have to be given pupils, especially, as we have seen, in the first or introductory stage, and in any explanations that are necessary in connection with the narrative. The teacher should be careful to make any

such explanations clear and sharp-cut, brief and to the point. He must not yield to the temptation to go into too much detail. Pupils of this age do not need it.

2. *The discussion method.* This can profitably be used in many places, and should be used wherever possible. It is an invaluable method for encouraging pupils to think for themselves, to take advantage of what others think, and to exercise freedom in coming to conclusions. The teacher will lead the discussion but will never forget that he is one of the group and that he is not there to force his opinions down the throats of others.

3. *Assignments.* This is a very valuable method for teaching pupils to think and work for themselves. Combined with the discussion method it is ideal. In the assignment the teacher can give the introduction he thinks necessary, and can also take up any other points he wishes to. He can give the Bible references for reading, necessary for the second stage, and then can suggest, by questions or in other ways, guidance for the other sections. Discussion can come when the work in each section is finished, and this is probably the best procedure, or when the whole work has been finished. Use of assignments necessitates a fair amount of written work.

4. A modified form of the discussion method is what is called a panel discussion, where a question is taken up and discussed by a small group in front of the class. When the small group, which is led by the teacher, has finished the discussion, then the subject is thrown open for the whole class. This may be used in stages 5 and 6.

5. If assignments are not used, each pupil should have a notebook. In this the work should be divided up into sections according to the stages we have suggested, in this note-book the pupil will write down a brief outline of the events in the life, and then, in the following sections, the conclusions he comes to about the various issues raised. This work should be done before it is taken up in class, and

each alternate page should be left blank so that the pupil may amplify what he has written after taking part in the class discussion, and after hearing what the teacher has to say. The fullness of what is written will depend on the time available, and on the importance of the character being studied.

6. Dramatics should be employed when there is time. This is especially valuable with the lower age level, 9-11, but is also useful with, and interesting to, older pupils also. The drawback in using dramatics is usually the time that is taken. This can be met to a large extent, if pupils are trained to act short plays, and dramatize incidents, without preparation. That is, as soon as the incident has been studied, selected children give an impromptu dramatic presentation of the incident, parts being assigned and taken up there and then, in the class-room. This may be difficult at first, but can be done very successfully when pupils have had a little practice at it. Occasionally longer and more pretentious dramatic performances could be given.

Below is given a specimen assignment on the life of Elijah :—

## THE LIFE OF ELIJAH

### *Introduction.*

Read the following:—

There had been a period of 36 years from the death of Jeroboam and the death of Omri. During this period there had been six kings of the northern kingdom. Of these two had been killed, one had killed himself, two had followed their fathers on the throne of Israel, and two had been put into their positions by the army. It is easy to imagine how wretched must have been the condition of the common people during these troublous times. Now we come to the time of Ahab, a stronger king, in which there was to develop a definite struggle

between the religion of Jehovah and that of the gods of Tyre.

When the Hebrews entered Canaan, they found the inhabitants worshipping gods of their own, called Baals. These Baals were supposed to be gods of life and fertility. It was they who were thought to give the crops and increase in herds and cattle. The Baals gave life, the streams that watered the fields, and the heat of the sun. In short they gave all that was concerned with life and its continuing in the world. Baal or the Baals had places of worship on every hill-top.

The marriage of Ahab to Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidon, brought a new phase of Baal worship into the country. Her god was the Baal of Tyre called Melkarth. Ahab allowed her to continue to worship her own god, but went further than that, and apparently himself tried to combine a worship of this god with the worship of Jehovah. He worshipped Jehovah as the God of war, and Baal as the god of nature and fertility. He apparently did not abandon the worship of Jehovah, as is shown by the fact that he named his sons, Azariah (Jehovah helps) and Jehoram (Jehovah is exalted). But he was weak, and allowed his wife to spread her religion, and to persecute those who stood for the religion of Jehovah. Still, many did stand firm, as we read of prophets and sons of the prophets who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and also of a sect called the Rechabites (first heard of in this period) who stood for opposition to Canaanitish culture and religion.

Religiously then, the stage was set for a struggle between those who whole-heartedly stood for the religion of Jehovah and those who favoured Baal, with the king wobbling from one side to the other.

Economically, at this time the northern kingdom appears to have been in a good position. Material wealth seems to have been great. During excavations ivory furniture encrusted with gold has been found in what is believed to

have been Ahab's palace. But there seems to have been a strong tendency away from the older and more democratic practices, and rich men were trying to enlarge their estates at the expense of the poorer people. Power was passing into the hands of the wealthy and privileged. This is an evil that subsequent prophets were to fulminate against.

2. Read the following passages which give all the information we have about Elijah. When you have read them carefully make a brief summary in your note-books of the events of his life.

1 Kings, chapters 17, 18, 19, 21; 2 Kings 2:1-15. In your note-books draw a sketch map of Palestine and Syria, to illustrate the life of Elijah, putting in Mt. Carmel, Jezreel, Beersheba, the Jordan river, Damascus, Mt. Horeb.

3. Write down what you consider to have been the main characteristics of Elijah, his strong points and his weak points. In such case, give briefly your reasons for concluding that he possessed the characteristic in question.

4. How did the religion of Elijah differ from that of Ahab?

How did it differ from that of Jezebel?

What would you say was the main feature of Elijah's religious life? Why was he always held in such honour by the Jews, ranking second only to Moses? (Remember the time of crisis at which he lived, Baal or Jehovah.)

5. Be prepared to take part in a discussion with the rest of the class on (a) what was Elijah's greatest achievement, his greatest contribution to the life of the people of his day, and (b) what was the most outstanding and significant event of his life.

6. Try to come to some conclusions about the message of Elijah and his life for us today. In this connection consider carefully (1) the issue at Carmel, and Elijah's question: How long halt ye, between two opinions? Is there a lesson for us today here? (2) The story of Naboth's vineyard. This incident shows how God values the

common man and His indignation against those who treat others unjustly. Is there a lesson here for the world today? What do you think was Elijah's attitude to the government? Did he hesitate to tell the King what God thought about him? Do prophets nowadays tell the government what God thinks about them? Should they do so?

## TRAIT STUDIES

This is a method of study which can be used with great advantage at any age from eleven and twelve on through adolescence. The detailed analysis and study undertaken will vary with the age of pupils, but the general method of approach, and of dealing with the trait in question, will be much the same with all.

In general terms the method is to make an analysis of what we mean by the trait which is to be studied, such as obedience, courage, dependability, loyalty, honesty, and so on, and to arrive at a definition of the trait, and an understanding of its scope, which will be adequate for those in the group. This may not be very definite, but pupils must have some idea of what courage, for instance, really is. Then we proceed to study examples of the trait with the object of making the perhaps rather abstract and general idea of the trait concrete and more definite. These examples, in the first place, will be taken from the Bible. This is where the Biblical material is to be stressed. At this stage the trait may be studied as one whole, or, and this is usually the better course, it may be taken up in its different aspects, as for example, in the case of courage, physical courage, and moral courage. Although for our present purposes we are considering the teaching of the Old Testament and the use of Old Testament material, it is obvious that New Testament material will be used as freely as Old Testament material in the study of any trait.

Following the use of Biblical examples and material, in order to clarify the idea of the trait, extra-Biblical material may also be used, as considered necessary.

The next step is to bring things down to actual practical life and to confront pupils with situations and problems, such as are likely to arise in every-day life, or as have actually arisen in the experience of the pupils, and to see how presence of the trait in question will affect practical life. This is best done by confronting the pupil with situations and problems, and letting him find a solution for them. He will then understand, in a practical way, the bearing of the trait in question on every-day life. Such examples and problems can be either positive or negative; that is, illustrating how the presence or the absence of the trait affects action. This stage again can be taken when dealing with the trait as a whole, or when dealing with different aspects of the trait.

In this way pupils will be led to understand the importance of the trait and its effects on life.

The final stage is to plan and carry out definite action which will call the trait into play; in other words, to commence making the trait a habit of character.

During the study of a trait, the group discussion method will be extensively used, and problems that arise, or are suggested by pupils or teacher will be discussed by the group.

One of the advantages of this method of trait study is that it enables close correlation with other studies that are being pursued and with practical life. For instance, when the study of a biography is being undertaken, one or more trait studies will normally be done in connection with the life and character of the person being studied. Or when the problem method of approach is used, trait studies will naturally form part of the work. That is, a trait study may form a unit of work by itself. But it is usually better when such a study naturally arises out of

whatever work is being done. As I have said the exhaustiveness or otherwise of the study will depend on the age of the pupils, and also on the way in which the trait study comes up, and on the particular needs and problems of the pupils concerned.

The following is an illustration of how a trait study may be worked out. The trait in question is that of 'Loyalty' and the age level for which it has been worked out is 15-18. Although in this illustration the Biblical material used is confined to that supplied by the Old Testament, it will be obvious that there is a considerable amount of material in the New Testament which could also be used.

### *Loyalty*

1. The aim of the study is to bring home to pupils the important place which loyalty plays in life, the different conflicts of loyalties which arise in life, how these conflicts must be resolved, the necessity of a supreme loyalty in life, and to set pupils on the road which leads to the making of such loyalty a habit of life and action.

2. What is loyalty?

Get pupils to give their ideas of what loyalty is. In order to make the discussion concrete, ask pupils to give examples from history, or from their own experience, of men or women who have shown loyalty, and why they think that loyalty was shown in the particular instances given. •

Such examples may be used as the attitude of Germans to Hitler, the Japanese to the Mikado, Indians to Mr. Gandhi, Muslims to Mr. Jinnah, Rama and his brothers, stories from the life of Sadhu Sunder Singh.

The group may come to the conclusion that loyalty involves such things as obedience, devotion to a person or a cause, resulting in a willingness to sacrifice, consecration of powers and possessions and abilities to a person or a cause.

Pupils should be asked to discuss whether there are different kinds of loyalty, corresponding to the different objects of loyalty. They may reach the following conclusions:—

1. Loyalty to God.
2. Loyalty to truth and right.
3. Loyalty to friends.
4. Loyalty to the group in which one lives, leading to loyalty to one's country.

*N.B.*—The dictionary explains that a loyal person is one who is true and faithful to duty, love or obligation, one who is faithful in allegiance to the sovereign, government or mother-country; one who is enthusiastically devoted to the sovereign's person and family (the dictionary does not expressly say so, but sovereign will mean both earthly sovereign and heavenly sovereign).

The group can now take up these four kinds of loyalty and study them separately.

*A. Loyalty to God.*

The following instances from the Bible may be studied:—

1. Abraham's attitude to God and His call when he left his country. (Genesis 12 : 1-9.)
2. Moses' answer to God when called to the dangerous task of freeing the Hebrews from Egypt. (Exodus, chapters 3 and 4.)
3. The story of Daniel and his friends. (Daniel 1 : 8-16.)
4. The story of Daniel's friends and the fiery furnace. (Daniel, chapter 3.)
5. The story of Daniel and the lions' den. (Daniel, chapter 6.)
6. The story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. (1 Kings, chapter 18.)
7. The story of Hanani. (2 Chronicles 16 : 7-10.)
8. The story of Zachariah. (2 Chronicles 24 : 15-22.)

The following are two negative instances, that is, examples of disloyalty to God:—

1. The story of Saul and the Amelakites. (1 Samuel, chapter 15.)
2. The story of the prophet sent to Amaziah. (2 Chronicles 26 : 14–16.)

Loyalty to God may be further illustrated by stories of the early Christian martyrs, by stories from the life of Sadhu Sunder Singh, by stories from the lives of converts such as Pandita Ramabai, the story of the Pilgrim Fathers.

Let the group discuss what is involved in loyalty to God, and the qualities that result in such loyalty.

Faith.

Courage, which, they may conclude, is another name for courage.

Devotion to duty.

Love and friendship. (Abraham was the friend of God.)

The group should consider the following cases:—

1. In a class with a large number of non-Christians, who have non-Christian standards, what is loyalty to God likely to demand of us? Give instances where you have found it difficult to be loyal to God, and try to see why this has been difficult.
2. In a class there are those who sneer at religion and openly mock at prayer and worship. The Christian students remain silent in the face of this. Is this loyalty to God? If not, what action would loyalty demand?
3. In a class are one or two who are strongly in favour of Communism, and have the common attitude of the Marxian Communist to God and religion. The Christian students feel the justification of a great deal that the Communist supporters say

about conditions, and about what ought to be done. What line of action should they take if they are to be loyal to God?

4. A Christian boy is in the school hockey team, which is playing in the final of a tournament. This match is fixed for a Sunday. What should he do? (Refer to the runner Eric Liddell, and his action at the Olympic Games.)
5. A well-known political leader has come to a small town, where such visitors are rarely seen. His meeting is fixed for a Sunday at the same time as the C.E. meeting. What should the Christian students do?

*B. Loyalty to what is right, and to the truth.*

This is listed here as a second aspect of loyalty. Let the group discuss whether it is really a separate kind of loyalty, or whether it is really the same as loyalty to God.

The following instances of this particular kind of loyalty from the Old Testament should be studied:—

1. The story of Nathan's rebuke of David for the wrong he had done. Consider the danger that Nathan ran in speaking to a king as he did. (2 Samuel 12 : 1-14.)
2. The story of Joseph's loyalty to right in face of temptation first, and then, in prison, in face of persecution and trouble. (Genesis 39 : 7-23.)
3. The story of Micaiah standing for what he knew was right against the king and his prophets. (1 Kings 22 : 1-29.)
4. The story of Elijah rebuking Ahab about his action in the judicial murder of Naboth. (1 Kings 21 : 1-24.)
5. This aspect of the trait of loyalty is illustrated in the life of Jeremiah, in his attitude to his nation and

to their policies. Let the pupils try to find instances of this from Jeremiah.

6. In the same way we find Amos standing for the right against the powerful people of his time; the religious leaders and the upper classes. Let pupils find instances of this from the book of Amos.

Loyalty to right and truth may be illustrated from history:—

1. The action of the Buddha in renouncing his court life for the search for truth.
2. Asoka's repentance.
3. The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Singh.
4. Ram Mohan Roy's struggle against sati.
5. The negative example of the action of Galileo, when faced with persecution because of his discoveries in science.

The action of conscientious objectors in time of war should be discussed in this connection.

Let the group discuss what is involved in loyalty to truth. They may find that the following are necessary:—

1. Certainty of the truth.
2. An enlightened and educated conscience.
3. A passion for truth, and a conviction of its supreme value.
4. Courage.
5. A conviction that it is the will of God for us to be loyal to truth.

The group should consider cases such as the following:—

1. A boy cheats in an examination. Is he loyal to right and truth? If not, why not?
2. In order to please a person we flatter him, and say things about him in his praise which we know to be untrue, or, at least, to be exaggerated. Is this showing loyalty to truth?

3. Someone shows us something they have done, or something they have written. To save any unpleasantness, and to please him, we praise his work, though we do not consider it to be very good. We do not point out any of the things in it which we think are defects. Is this loyalty to truth?
4. The class decide to do something which one boy thinks is wrong. But he keeps silent as he knows that to oppose the rest will make him unpopular, and perhaps cause him to be persecuted. Is this loyalty to truth? Compare the action of Micaiah.
5. A boy in school sees one of his companions take something which does not belong to him. What should the first boy do if he is loyal to truth and right?
6. A number of boys combine to make life unpleasant for one boy who is disliked. You do not participate actively in what the rest are doing, but do nothing. Is this loyalty to right?
7. You are in the school debating team. The side of the subject which is given your team is the one in which you do not believe. What should you do? (Refer to the example of President Wilson when faced with such a situation.)
8. When playing a match the teacher in charge makes a suggestion about a trick to play which you think to be wrong. What should you do?
9. A man, who has made money in ways you consider to be wrong, offers a large sum to your school or your Church. What do you think should be the attitude of the authorities to such a gift?
10. In the Christian Endeavour, or in some other organization, there comes up a matter, such as

the inspiration of the Bible, on which you hold convictions which are different from those of the other members. What should you do about it?

11. You are given a bad four-anna bit. What should you do with it?
12. You are a member of a co-operative shop. There are certain articles which are badly needed for the shop. You find that they can be obtained in the black market. What should you do?
13. You are asked to undertake a certain task.

Are the following actions loyal to (a) God, (b) to truth and right, (c) to your employers or your teachers?—

1. You make an excuse which has some foundation, but which is no real reason for not doing the job in question.
2. You agree to do the work, and then forget all about it, and do nothing.
3. You begin to do it, but do not finish it.
4. You do the work carelessly and badly.
5. You ask someone else to do it, and he pays no attention to it.
6. If the work in question is connected with regular routine, and has to be done everyday or every week, you do it all right for some time, and then gradually drop it.
7. You go to the person who has asked you to do the work, and say that it is too difficult and that you cannot do it, or you say that others are making it difficult for you to do the work, and you find you must give it up.
8. If it is a routine job, you do it only when you think that someone will inspect it.

### C. *Loyalty to Friends.*

The following instances from the Old Testament may be studied:—

1. The story of Judah and Benjamin. (Genesis, chapter 44.)
2. The story of David and Jonathan. (1 Samuel, chapter 20.) (An example of loyalty to a friend even though it meant the loss of a kingdom.)
3. The story of Jacob and Esau. (Genesis 25 : 29-34; Genesis, chapter 27.) This is a negative example of disloyalty.
4. The story of David and his friend Hushai. (2 Samuel 15 : 32-37; 16 : 15-19; 17 : 1-22.)
5. The loyalty or otherwise of Job's three friends may be discussed.

Tell the story of Damon and Pythias.

Let the group study the following cases:—

1. You see that your friend is cheating in an examination. What should you do?
2. Your friend has done something which is unpopular and is being ridiculed and treated badly. What should you do?
3. Your friend is accused of doing something wrong which has annoyed all the members of the class. He maintains that he is innocent. What does loyalty to him demand of you?
4. Your friend comes to you and tells you that he is in trouble. You can save him from the consequences of what he has done if you are willing to tell a lie for him. What should you do?
5. Your friends are keenly interested in politics, and are very anxious for you to join with them in their discussions and activities. They are forming a society with a pledge which they wish

every one to take. Should you share in what they are doing if (a) you know that your parents would not approve, (b) you think that your school work would suffer, (c) you can see that signing the pledge would possibly involve you in some unchristian actions? How can you be loyal to your friends and do what is right?

6. You are asked to give an opinion about a friend which will have the effect of either helping him to get a position or of hindering him. You know he has a weakness. Should you tell the person who is enquiring about him of this weakness, or tell only of your friend's good points?
7. Your friend has a fault which you think is spoiling his life. He takes offence easily and you are afraid that if you speak to him about this fault you will lose his friendship. What should you do?

The group should discuss what is involved in loyalty to friends. They may come to the following conclusions:—

1. Truthfulness.
2. Affection.
3. Courage.
4. Tactfulness.
5. Willingness to sacrifice.

D. *Loyalty to Country.*

The following examples from the Old Testament may be studied:—

1. Jeroboam's revolt against Rehoboam. (1 Kings, chapter 12.)
2. Naaman and his scorn of the Jordan. (2 Kings 5 : 8-14.)
3. Instances may be taken of the way in which the great prophets spoke against the government

and the people of their times, and their loyalty may be discussed. Such prophets as Amos and Jeremiah may be specially considered. The group should discuss whether Jeremiah was a defeatist. Let pupils try to find out for themselves, from reading the books of the prophets in question, what their attitude was towards their country.

In this connection the following statements may be considered and discussed.

'A healthy loyalty is not passive and complacent, but active and critical. If it finds ground for attack (on the government or people of the country) it must occupy that ground.'<sup>1</sup>

'We owe no state or church a blind or unreasoning obedience. We owe it only the utmost insight of which our judgment is capable.'<sup>2</sup>

The group should try to arrive at what is involved in loyalty to one's country. They may arrive at the following:—

1. Standing for the dictates of conscience.
2. Obedience to what is understood to be the will of God.
3. Courage.
4. Self-sacrifice.
5. Gaining knowledge so that judgment may be informed.

Let the group discuss the action of those who joined the Indian National Army with reference to this subject of loyalty.

Let them discuss the question of whether conscientious objectors in time of war are loyal to their country.

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<sup>1</sup> The Dangers of Obedience, *H. Laski*. Harpers. p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Many instances of loyalty and disloyalty can be given from history.

The group should now take up the problem of the *conflict of loyalties*. The following instances from the Old Testament may be studied:—

1. David and Jonathan. A conflict between loyalty to parents (in this case also to king) and loyalty to a friend.
2. Michal (the wife of David) and David. A conflict between loyalty to husband and loyalty to parents (in this case also to king). (1 Samuel 19 : 8-17.)
3. Elijah and Ahab. A conflict between loyalty to God and loyalty to king and country.
4. Jonah. A conflict between loyalty to God and to country.
5. Jael and Sisera. A conflict between loyalty to right and loyalty to country. (Judges, chapter 4). (Note that the conflict was not realized by Jael.)
6. Joab and the killing of Absalom. A conflict between loyalty to one's master, in this case the king, and loyalty to one's ideas of what should be done. (2 Samuel, chapter 18.)
7. Jeroboam and the setting up of the golden calves. A conflict between loyalty to God and political expediency. (1 Kings, chapter 12.)
8. Micaiah. A conflict between loyalty to God and to mass opinion.

In some of these cases there is a real conflict of loyalties. In others, when the position is analyzed, it will probably be found that there was only a seeming conflict. The group should discuss the question of whether there is ever a real clash of loyalties, or whether, when there seems to be a

clash, it is because one of the loyalties is mistaken and is not true loyalty.

The group should individually set down times when they have been faced with a conflict of loyalties in life.

Let them also list the causes of disloyalty that they find in themselves, or that they find in others.

Let them refer back to the various qualities which they have found to be necessary for loyalty, and try to see how these qualities may be cultivated. At this stage a study of Jesus' loyalty to His Father and to truth should be undertaken. The group should be encouraged to make a decision to be loyal to God and truth in all things. Later they may report on where they have found this difficult, and so get help from the leader and from one another.

Each member should make a list of times when he has been disloyal, and set out to eliminate such actions or habits from his life.

Additional questions for consideration and discussion:—

1. If the state forbids us to try to spread our Christian beliefs what should we do? This can be discussed with reference to early Church history.
2. What attitude does loyalty to Christian standards and to Christ demand that we should take to (a) communism, (b) our present economic system, (c) internationalism, (d) war?
3. Is it really disloyal to one's country to criticize the government, even in time of crisis, such as war?
4. Does loyalty to conscience, that is, our idea of what is right and wrong, always demand that we should oppose those who think differently from ourselves?

Sometimes a trait study can be undertaken which is not so detailed and in which we use one particular incident or series of incidents, or one particular life. The following is an example of how material may be used in this way:—

*Perseverance.*<sup>1</sup>

The story of Nehemiah and how he built the wall.

- Nehemiah 2 : 1-8. The work planned.
- „ 2 : 9-16. The first step; a survey. Beginning of opposition. Prejudice against the scheme.
- „ 2 : 17-20. Group decision to undertake the work. Increased opposition. Ridicule.
- „ 3. Work divided out to members of the group and begun.
- „ 4 : 1-6. Perseverance strengthened by prayer to God. Further opposition. More ridicule.
- „ 4 : 7-9. In face of worse opposition perseverance again strengthened by prayer. Increased opposition. Violent measures planned.
- „ 4 : 10. Some of the group disheartened and discouraged.
- „ 4 : 11-12. Warning from friends of trouble if the work is persisted in.
- „ 4 : 13-15. In spite of this the work is persisted in, and the enemy are discomfited.
- „ 4 : 16-23. Determination strengthened, and precautions are taken against failure, also measures to meet and defeat the opposition. The work is to be persevered with at all costs.
- „ 5. Internal dissensions threaten the work. Co-operation is secured by the leader

<sup>1</sup> The New Light, *Ryburn and King*, Y.M.C.A. Pub. House, pp. 159-160.

and the work proceeds.

- Nehemiah 6 : 1-4. Answer to new form of opposition 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down'. Nothing is to be allowed to interfere with the carrying on of the work. New form of opposition. Cunning trickery and deceit.
- „ 6 : 5-9. Opposition again met with prayer to God for strength. 'Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.' Opposition now takes the form of a threat to accuse the workers of working against the Government.
- „ 6 : 10-14. Opposition again met with prayer. Defeated by the leader's faith in God which prevented him from falling a victim to fear. Opposition attempt to stop the work. They also try to make the leader afraid.
- „ 6 : 15-16. Triumphant completion of the work. In the end the opposition has to admit that the 'work was wrought of our God'.

After working through this story pupils may discuss how Nehemiah made his people persevere, and how he got his own strength to go on.

They should list the things that make perseverance difficult. They may arrive at some such list as the following.

Fear. Laziness. Opposition. Ridicule. Difficulty of the work which is to be done. Results are slow in coming. Ill-health. Lack of faith.

They should also list the things which are necessary if we are to be persevering, such as, faith in God, courage, energy, knowledge of the usefulness of what we are doing.

Let members of the group each make a list of things they have started to do and left unfinished, and the reasons for this.

Refer to Jesus' words, 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God'.

Some fields where we should be ploughing may be suggested, and plans made to start work in some of these fields. For example, the fields of superstition, of class feeling, of poverty, of ignorance, of honesty, of sincerity, and so on.

The following are suggestions for material from the Old Testament which could be used with trait studies :—

*Friendliness:*

David and Jonathan.

Abraham and Lot.

*Positive examples:*

The Shunamite woman and Elisha.

Hushai and David.

Jeremiah and Baruch.

Elijah and Obediah.

*Negative examples:*

Jacob and Esau.

Joseph's brothers.

The story of the old prophet of Bethel told in  
1 Kings, chapter 13.

Job's friends.

*Courage:*

Micaiah.

The three young men in the fiery furnace.

Daniel.

Gideon.

Mathan.

Elijah.

David.

Amos.

*Service:*

The little captive maid.

Joseph in prison.

*Positive examples:*

Ruth.

Moses.

Joshua and Caleb.

Samuel.

Elisha.

*Negative examples:*

Aaron and the golden calf.

The ten spies.

Joab.

• *Obedience:*

Abraham.

Moses.

*Positive examples:*

Amos.

Jeremiah.

Elijah.

*Negative examples:*

Saul.

Jonah.

Material which can be used for the short type of trait study.

*Conscientiousness:*

The story of Joseph in Potiphar's house in prison and as Governor of Egypt.

*Truthfulness:*

The life of Jacob (from a negative point of view).

*Courage:*

The life of Elijah.

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## THE PROBLEM METHOD OF APPROACH

This is perhaps not so much a method of teaching the Old Testament or material out of the Old Testament, as it is a method of general Scripture teaching which enables us to use material taken from the Old Testament in a useful and appealing way, and in a way which inevitably links it up with the life of the pupil.

The method consists in taking a problem which confronts pupils, a difficulty in their everyday lives, and making that problem or difficulty the centre and starting point of our Scripture teaching. Since this centre or core of the teaching is taken from everyday life, if it is a real difficulty, a burning issue, it follows that all we say and discuss and do about it, will also be related intimately to life. Hence by using this method our teaching is vitally related to life.

The problem is taken, or obtrudes itself. The first step then is to analyze the problem, to find out the reasons for the existence of the difficulty, and the issues involved in it. Then follows the stage of showing how other people have had to face the same problem, and have solved it. This is where the definite Scripture teaching comes in. Material is taken from the Bible to show how the problem may be solved. Extra-biblical material may be used also, but the main emphasis should be on Biblical material. After this comes a study of the qualities that are necessary if the problem is to be solved, the characteristics that we have to cultivate if we are going to meet our difficulty successfully. In taking up this section of the work, if it is felt to be useful and suitable, definite trait studies can be taken up, and

again this gives an opportunity to use Biblical material. Finally comes the stage of *action*, when pupils plan to do something about their difficulty, and carry out their plans. When they have worked for some time on this, then a further stage of report and discussion can be arranged to go over results, and to make any adaptations in plans that may be seen to be necessary in the light of the experience they have had.

This, in brief, is the problem method of approach. It is obvious that New Testament material will be used as much as that from the Old Testament, but this is all to the good, and gives us an opportunity to bring the two together.

### THE PROBLEM OF LIVING TOGETHER

#### A. *The Problem.*

Let the teacher point out the various spheres where we are faced with this problem and lead his pupils to understand how vital it is to all life:

1. Living together in the family—small family disputes, and the effect they have—the relation between brothers and sisters and between children and parents. Get pupils to give instances from their own experience of times when they have failed to live properly with other members of their families, and then instances where they have seen others fail in the same way.
2. Living together in the community—are there any weaknesses in the community to which the children belong—do people in the same congregation always succeed in living happily together—are there troubles in other communities—the communal problem in India.
3. Living together in the Church—are all Christians able to live together? Why are there divisions in the Christian Church? Quarrels and trouble in the one Church—missions and Churches.

4. In the world—disputes between nations—wars, which affect everyone of us very intimately—hatred of people of other countries—keeping them and their goods out of our country, while they keep us and our goods out of their country—the failure of efforts to make international agreements.

*B. Analysis of the problem.*

Get the class to try to think out the reasons for our inability to live together in each of the four spheres where we have found the presence of the problem. This can be done individually, or by a class discussion, or by one followed by the other.

Before individual study of the subject begins, the teacher should give concrete instances of the problem in each sphere. From considering these concrete instances, the pupils will find it much easier to arrive at the causes of our failure in the art of living together. Such instances as the following may be given :

Jacob and Esau.

Joseph and his brothers.

Communal riots in India.

A quarrel in a congregation about the pastor.

Some Christians will not sit at the communion table with others. The present trouble between the Arabs and the Jews, between the Communists and the Government party in China.

Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

From a consideration of these and similar cases the pupils should be able to arrive at such causes of failure to succeed in living together as the following :

Selfishness, greed, deceit, intolerance, emphasis on rights rather than on duties, too much concern with *izzat*, fear, desire for power, exaggerated self-assertion.

### C. *Presentation.*

The class should now proceed to see how success has been achieved in the art of living together. Let them study the following instances from the Bible.

1. The story of Abraham and Lot and the quarrel over where their flocks and herds were to graze. What quality did Abraham show which prevented this from becoming a quarrel between himself and his nephew?

(Meekness and the ability to give way, not considering rights.) What do the class think of Lot's attitude?

2. The story of Moses and Eldad and Medad given in Numbers 11 : 24-29. What quality did Moses show here that prevented trouble, which would have been caused by Joshua?

(Tolerance and generosity of spirit; lack of envy and smallness of mind.) Have this story compared with that of John in Mark 9 : 38.

3. The story of the captive maid (generosity of spirit, willingness to forgive and serve those who have injured us).
4. Elijah and the widow (willingness to share with others, even in time of need, gratitude on Elijah's part).
5. The story of Jonathan and David and their friendship (preferring one another, even to the loss of a throne).
6. Esau forgiving Jacob. Contrast the attitudes of Jacob and Esau and bring out how one caused trouble and the other removed it.
7. Joseph in Potiphar's house and in prison (dependability and trustworthiness in the most difficult of circumstances).
8. The story of the Israelites and the building of the tabernacle (co-operation).

9. Nehemiah and the re-building of Jerusalem and the Temple (co-operation).
10. The story of Moses' willingness to suffer for his people (Exodus 32 : 30-34).

In presenting all these stories the teacher will bring out, either in his telling, or preferably in discussion with the class, the traits and qualities shown which contributed to ability to live with others successfully.

If considered beneficial, trait studies of any of the traits brought out may be taken up, e.g. co-operation, tolerance, generosity of spirit.

#### *D. Planning action.*

Have a discussion with the members of the class on what they can do to improve themselves so that they can live with others better, and so that it is easier for others to live with them, and also on what practical measures they can take to improve living together in their school or village.

#### *E. Conduct Assignment.*

From this follows definite lines of work.

Such projects as the following might be undertaken:—

1. Through Red Cross Societies or any organization for the purpose, a regular programme of attention to, and care for, those of the school or village who are sick.
2. Conciliation societies where the members pledge themselves to avoid quarrels and to bring 'for arbitration' all differences with others.
3. 'Big Brother' or 'Big Sister' projects where individuals take a special interest in someone who needs help in work or in other ways.
4. Any form of co-operation or co-operative society which may be necessary.

5. Formation of a Junior League of Nations (or whatever name the new organization may have) society, with a view to understanding people of other nations and to spreading that understanding.

F. Report at intervals on how the various projects are getting on, and on what changes, in the light of experience gained, should be made.

#### *The Problem of Choosing a Vocation.*

This problem naturally presents itself towards the time when pupils are coming to the end of a school stage, and have to decide what they are going to do when they leave school. Normally it is better if they can be led to think about this when in the 8th class, and it should not be left till later, just before they matriculate.

#### *A. The Problem.*

This consists in finding out what the individual is going to do when he leaves school and goes out into the world, and in knowing what to take into consideration when coming to a decision.

The teacher should bring out the importance of the decision that has to be made, especially in view of the fact that God has a definite purpose, and a definite work for each individual. The problem resolves itself into each individual finding out the will of God for himself. Choosing a vocation is a solemn matter, not to be done carelessly or light-heartedly or without proper consideration. The success of one's whole life, from the highest point of view, depends on the decision made.

#### *B. Analysis of the Problem.*

The teacher should get the class to suggest different considerations which should affect the choice of an occupation. These may be listed: (1) Money-making. (2) De-

sire for power and position. (3) General self-interest and family interest. (4) Parents' wishes. (5) Duty to help parents financially. (6) The needs of the community. (7) The opportunities for service which the occupation provides. (8) The abilities and powers which God has given us. (9) Whether the occupation in question will help or prevent us in following our ideals in life. (10) Generally whether the occupation is the will of God for us.

Each of these criteria should be discussed and a decision made as to how far each is valid and deserves consideration. Other motives than those suggested above will probably be given, and should be listed. But there should be a decision on the part of each member of the class as to the value of each motive. If possible each individual should list the various motives suggested in order of value.

### *C. Presentation.*

How others chose their work:

1. Abraham    He was called to give up home, country, comfort, security and to venture forth. Why did he do it?
2. Joseph    How did he find his life work? He refused to let life get him down. He made the best of circumstances. He did faithfully the job to hand, whatever it was. Thus he was prepared for greater work.
3. Gideon    Responding to a need, even though not sure of himself, and his powers. Faith in God's help.
4. Moses    Also responding to a need although he felt inadequate for the work for which God called him. Note also that the call came in the course of his daily work.

5. Isaiah      Following the distinct call of God,  
brought home by the needs of the  
community.
6. Jeremiah    The same as Isaiah.
7. Joshua      Truthfulness and faithfulness in a  
small job leads to a bigger one.

Note that none of these people we have considered chose what they would do because of what they could make out of it, either in money or position or power. In each case there was a pressing sense of the call of God, brought home through a real sense of the needs of others.

Consider two negative cases. That of Samson, who spoiled his life, and Jonah who tried not to respond to the call of God.

#### D. *Planning action.*

Deciding what type of work to take up. This must be done by each pupil for himself with the help of the teacher. Making plans to prepare himself for the particular work that has been chosen.

#### E. *Action.*

Putting these plans into action.

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## THE STUDY OF AN INDIVIDUAL BOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In taking up the study of an individual book, the following is a scheme which may be generally followed. If necessary, modifications may be made in the scheme, as found necessary. The time given to any particular point, and the intensiveness of treatment of any particular point, will also vary with the book in question, with the needs of the class, and with the particular object the teacher has in view.

In taking up the study of a particular book, the object of the study will normally be to give pupils an adequate idea of the message of the author, and of the bearing of this message on the problems of our times, social and individual.

### 1. *The Aim of the Study.*

The first step is for the teacher to explain to his pupils the aim of the study they are undertaking. This may have already been made explicitly in the course of previous discussion and study, and the study may have been undertaken in response to an expressed need or desire of the pupils. In this case, making the aim explicit will be done very briefly. But, in any case, the teacher should make plain to all his pupils why they are going to study this particular book, the points that are likely to be brought out, and the advantages that they will get from a study of the book under consideration. In short, the teacher will

do anything necessary to make clear to his pupils what they are going to do, and why they are going to do it.

## 2. *The Background of the Book.*

The first matter to be dealt with is the historical, social and religious background of the book. The teacher should give his pupils some idea of the times in which the book was written, of the social and political condition of the Hebrews at the time, and of the setting of the book in the religious development of the people. For instance, if the book of Deuteronomy is to be studied, then it is necessary to give information about the reign of Josiah, of the conditions of the people of the Southern Kingdom when he came to the throne, of the religious state of the people under Manasseh, and of the issues involved in the reformation, to aid which the book was written.

## 3. *The Author.*

Whenever possible such information as is available should be given about the author. Pupils should be given a brief sketch of his life, of his qualities of character, of his call, and of his main aims in life. It is, of course, not always possible to do much along this line, especially where books are compilations, and where the author is not known. Even here, what information is available about how the book was compiled, should be given. Sometimes, as in the case of Jeremiah, a fair amount of biographical material is available, and an arresting character sketch can be given. Where we are given the information, particular emphasis should be laid on the author's call to write and work, and on his sense of vocation.

## 4. *An Analysis of the Contents of the Book.*

Here again the work to be done will vary greatly with the book. In some books such as Ruth and Jonah, where there is a straightforward narrative, little needs to be

done, although in the case of Jonah, for instance, it would be necessary to explain what type of writing it is; that is, that it is a parable or an allegory and not literal history. In the case of a book like that of Jeremiah, it is necessary to suggest an arrangement of the contents in chronological order, which will be different from the order as we have it in the authorized version, and also to divide up the contents according to their subject matter, and according to the people to whom they were addressed. In the case of a book such as Isaiah, where we have definite divisions into parts, written by different authors, this should be made clear.

#### 5. *The Teaching of the Book.*

In this section of the work, a study of the book will be made in detail, founded on what was done in the previous section, in order to get an idea of the main teaching of the book. The teacher will now try to bring out the main religious ideas of the author, the main themes of the book, and the objects that the author had before him.

#### 6. *Relating the Book and its Teaching to the Religious Development of the Hebrews.*

In this part of the work the teacher will try to place the teaching of the book in the general scheme of the religious development of the Hebrews as we have it recorded in the Old Testament, and will try to show what was the particular contribution made by the writer to that development. To do this will necessitate a comparison with other books and writings in the Old Testament, and an evaluation of the teaching of the book which is being studied. The teacher will naturally try to get pupils to do this for themselves. He will guide them to conclusions rather than simply tell them his own ideas. In both this section and in those that follow there will be a great deal of scope for the use of the discussion method. Recourse should be had

in this section to the general outline of the religious development of the Hebrews.

7. *Relating the Teaching of the Book to the Teaching of Jesus Christ.*

In this section the work will be of a similar type, but instead of comparing the teaching of the book with that of the rest of the Old Testament, a comparison will be made with the teaching of Jesus. In this way the elements of permanent value will be brought out, and also the part played by the author in preparing the way for the final revelation in Christ. This will be especially valuable in the case of such books as Jonah, Isaiah (particularly, Deutero-Isaiah), Micah, Hosea.

8. *The Lessons from the Book for our times.*

There should be two types of work attempted in this section. The first is to draw out the lessons for us in connection with the larger national, social, economic, political and religious issues of our times, and the second is to draw out the lessons for our individual lives. It is not always easy nor desirable to make this distinction, as every great issue is also a personal one, but often such a general line of demarkation can be drawn. It will be found that the more one studies numbers of the books of the Old Testament, especially the writings of the prophets, the more one finds that in the Old Testament we have the Word of God speaking to us today, just as it did to men of olden times. It comes to us with a compelling message just as it did to the Hebrew people in Old Testament times.

## THE BOOK OF JONAH

1. *The Aim of the Study.*

- (a) To show pupils that the book is a parable, not literal history, and to bring out the lesson that the author was trying to teach.

(b) This lesson is that God is the God of all the earth, and of all nations, and the Father of all men. The aim of the book was to wean the Jews from their national exclusiveness and superiority, and to teach them that God intended them to be missionaries to all people.

(c) To lead pupils to the place where they can appreciate, even if they do not agree with in full, an estimate of the book such as the following.

‘I have read the Book of Jonah at least a hundred times, and I will publicly avow, for I am not ashamed of my weakness, that I cannot even now take up this marvellous book, nay, nor even speak of it, without the tears rising to my eyes, and my heart beating higher. This apparently trivial book is one of the deepest and grandest that was ever written, and I should like to say to everyone who approaches it, “Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”.’

(d) To show pupils that this book is in the line of Hebrew religious development which was taken up by Jesus.

(e) To bring out the guidance for today, which the author, who has been termed ‘the first prophet of the League of Nations’, has for us.

## 2. *The Background of the Book.*

The second Isaiah had long before set out that Israel’s mission was to bring light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49 : 6). But when they came back from the exile, instead of accepting this world mission, the Hebrews took the line of hard exclusiveness, and intolerant nationalism. The book of Jonah is a protest against this spirit, as is also the book of Ruth.

Ninevah was chosen for the scene of Jonah's preaching because it stood for all the worst that could be found in the pagan nations of the time. To see what the Jew thought of Ninevah, read the book of Nahum, which gives an idea of the loathing and hatred which the Assyrian Empire inspired. Ninevah was the Germany and Japan of the times, the most hopeless of mission fields. (See also the later chapters of Zachariah (9-14) to get the popular idea of the treatment to be meted out to the enemies of Israel.)

There are two points in Jewish thought of the time which have to be taken into account in a study of this book.

1. *The Jewish attitude to the Sea.*

The Jews hated the sea. They did not understand it. They were a more or less landlocked nation, and the sea-coast which they could have used was in the hands of others. 'They feared the sea. It stood to them for a vast restless force—"The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly". No one but Yahweh Himself could rule them, and that He could do so was a sure sign of His ineffable power... It is He alone "Who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of His waves and the madness of the people" (Ps. 65 : 7). Nothing but the restraining power of Yahweh prevented it from overflowing its shores and swallowing up the earth... The sea was peopled by huge monsters, "there is that Leviathan, whom thou hast made to take his pastime therein" (Ps. 104 : 26) ... So, to the Jew, practically always the sea is a symbol of arrogance and restless rebellion against God, and it was quite natural that a great Christian Jew many centuries later, writing down his strange and beautiful vision of the new heaven and earth, should add the words, "And there was no more sea" (Rev. 21 : 1).'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Hebrew Prophet for the League of Nations (S.C.M.), *C.H.S. Mathews*, pp. 29-30.

Thus Jonah's flight represented the greatest desperation in trying to escape carrying out the will of God, and shows what the author thought of the attitude of the Jews to other nations, and of the lengths to which they would go to maintain their mistaken exclusiveness.'

## 2. *Dragon and monster mythology.*

It is common to find myths about dragons in all Semitic nations. The Babylonians had a myth about a monster called Tiamat. Leviathan was a mythical monster of the deep (mentioned in Job 3 : 9) and he was thought to swallow the sun and so cause eclipses. So, such a monster became, for the Jews, the symbol of a great conquering nation, and we have Jeremiah saying that Nebuchadnezzar had swallowed Israel up like a dragon. And then later God promises to bring up out of the mouth of this dragon that which he had swallowed (Jeremiah 51, vv. 34 and 44). Thus when we have a great fish pictured in Jonah, it is a symbol of the captivity of Israel in Babylon.

## 3. *The Author.*

The author of the book is not known. He wrote after the Jews had come back from the exile, possibly about 350-300 B.C. The prophet Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14 : 25. This prophet was evidently a prophet who believed in the type of patriotism which rejoiced in the overthrow and destruction of the enemies of the Jews. He therefore was fitted to play the part of the prophet in the book of Jonah who represented the exclusive nationalism of the Jews. The word 'Jonah' means a dove, and this again is indicative of theme that Israel was to bear God's good tidings to the nations.

## 4. *An Analysis of the Contents of the Book.*

The book is in the form of a parable, and is therefore straightforward. The Psalm of thanksgiving found in Chapter 2 (verses 2-9) seems to break into the story, and

does not fit in with the circumstances in which it was supposed to have been uttered (in the belly of the fish). It is therefore thought to have been added later, and not to be part of the original parable.

The parable falls into three main parts:

1. Jonah is called to his mission but seeks to evade it and to flee from God. Chapter 1 : 1 to Chapter 2 : 1 and 2 : 10.
2. Jonah is again called by God to carry out his mission, and this time does so, with the result that the people of Ninevah repent. Chapter 3.
3. Jonah shows his innate intolerance and is rebuked by God. Chapter 4.

5. *The Teaching of the Book.*

When dealing with this try to get pupils to come to their own conclusions, making sure that they base those conclusions on what they actually find in the book.

The main teaching is as follows:—

1. Israel (represented by Jonah, the 'Dove') has a special mission from Jehovah to the other nations of the world.
2. Jehovah is the God, not only of the Jews, but of the whole world, as represented by Ninevah.
3. Jehovah wishes the nations of the world to know about Him, and to have the chance of turning to Him.
4. God is merciful and willing to forgive those who repent, as against the general idea in Israel, that all such people as the people of Ninevah should be destroyed, which is shown by Jonah's displeasure when God forgave the people of Ninevah. The book is written to combat this common idea of the Jews.
5. The book is therefore a tract on world brotherhood.  
'The story was intended in the first place for

Judaism, and Jonah stands for Israel. The name means 'the Dove' and Israel was meant to be the bearer of God's good tidings to the nations. But she refused, and so there came her experience in the exile; Babylon, like a monster, swallowed Israel, until Jehovah forced him to disgorge her. Then once more the divine command was given to Israel to go and preach to the nations. But Israel, like Jonah, was hard of heart, and, in spite of Jehovah's entreaties, the work remained undone; Israel, instead of rejoicing to share in Jehovah's passion, sat down under her gourd (her own exclusive religious system), and waited to see God's vengeance on her enemies. No wonder God was distressed by Israel's attitude, and no wonder He longed to see in her a change of heart.<sup>1</sup>

6. Penitence is possible for all men, and an act of charity on the part of an enemy is the surest way to awaken that repentance.
7. The book warns us that if we know the truth, we have no right to try to thwart God's purpose, by trying to keep it to ourselves, and that, in reality, we cannot thwart that purpose however much we may wish to do so.

6. *Relating the Book to the Religious Development of the Jews.*

The book of Jonah is the final height which the small band of those who stood for the universal application of the love and mercy of God reached in the Old Testament. We have referred to the two strains in Jewish religious thought: the exclusive nationalist strain and the universalist

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<sup>1</sup> The Prophets of the Bible, *H. Cook*, S.C.M., p. 213.

strain. Representing this universalist element, we have the Book of Ruth, the Servant passages in Isaiah, Isaiah 19 : 24-25, Isaiah 25 : 6-8, Malachi 1 : 11, and Jonah.

7. *Relating the Book to the Teaching of Jesus Christ.*

The universalist element, which had its climax in the book of Jonah, was taken up by Christ. He stood in the direct line of the universalist prophets.

The book of Jonah teaches God's concern for man irrespective of race or nation. Get pupils to link this up with the teaching of Jesus.

'God cannot be what the book of Jonah suggests He is, and remain in heaven while His children on earth sin and suffer. He must come Himself to save them, and thus the Gospel of Christ is the inevitable sequel to all that the book of Jonah reveals of God.' <sup>1</sup>

8. *The Lessons from the Book for our Times.*

The teacher should try to get pupils to draw their own conclusions when studying the lessons for our time that we find in Jonah. The book has suggestions on the following problems:—

1. The treatment of enemies, national and personal.
2. Teaching against militarism and national hatred and jealousy.
3. The danger of feeling grateful to God for His mercies to us, but being unwilling to extend the same mercy to others (nationally and personally) of the parable of the unforgiving servant, whom Jonah very much resembles.
4. Refusal to do God's will results in separation from Him. Jonah cannot pray when in trouble but can only sleep.
5. God has a purpose for those who are willing to do His will. He had a purpose for the Jews.

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<sup>1</sup> The Prophets of the Bible, H. Cook, S.C.M., p. 214.

So did Jesus Christ. Has he got a purpose for us, nationally and personally? Can we defeat the purpose of God?

6. Penitence is possible even for the worst of men. Ninevah was the Japan of that day. Did God use an atomic bomb to make them repent? Does He expect us today to use atomic or any other kind of bombs to bring men and women to repentance?
7. Consider the following in the light of our present situation:—

‘How easy it is for us to understand Jonah’s attitude, the attitude of the Jewish nation towards their historic foes. We can understand how they would have rejoiced in announcing their doom at the hands of an outraged God of justice, if only justice, as they understood it, had been the sole attribute of the Lord as they knew Him. But if there is nothing more clear than that the perpetration of atrocities deserves the Divine punishment, there is nothing more dangerous than to picture oneself as the chosen instrument of the Divine justice. The words “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone” are as applicable to nations as to individuals.’

## THE BOOK OF AMOS

### 1. *The Aim of the Study.*

- (a) To make clear the message of Amos, and, in particular, his passion for social righteousness, and his work in relating religion with social and economic morality.
- (b) To find the message which Amos has for our times.

- (c) To rouse in pupils an interest in the canonical prophets, of which Amos is the first, and to bring home the relevance of their message from God, for our own times.

## 2. *The Background of the Book.*

Amos lived and worked in the reign of Jeroboam II, king of the Northern Kingdom. This king was one of the most successful, from a political point of view, of the kings of Israel. Due to the pre-occupation of Syria with Assyria, now growing in power, Israel had been able to reconquer some of her lost territory, and Jeroboam used the favourable political situation to carry on this work. He eventually got back for Israel all the territories which she had possessed in her heyday in the time of Solomon. Thus he was a successful king, and the country was successful and prosperous.

Wealth, due to increase of trade and control of the caravan route, increased rapidly, and Samaria was filled with wealthy banias. This wealth and prosperity was thought to be a sign of God's favour. The people crowded to the popular shrines, and were lavish with their sacrifices and offerings. They were a sort of insurance. They must, as it were, keep in with Jehovah, by an observance of the ritual of their religion, in order to keep their prosperity. And they expected still better things of Jehovah in the future.

Along with this increase of wealth, and of the bania class, and as a natural result of it, went oppression of the poor, social injustice, exploitation of the small farmers in the interests of the city merchants, and an almost complete destruction of the old, free, peasant community. The small holdings were converted into large estates, and the small farmers were reduced to a state of what was little better than slavery. They had been compelled to take out mortgages, and could not meet them when they fell

due. Then the bania foreclosed, and that was the end of the free peasant. Wealth brought inequality, cruelty and oppression, as it always does. Thus the moral and religious condition of the country was deplorable from the view of one who was not blinded by the false glamour of political and economic success.

### 3. *The Author.*

Amos was not a native of the Northern Kingdom. He came from the village of Tekoa, which was about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. He was a shepherd, living a hard and simple country life. But at the same time he knew about the conditions in the cities, in such great contrast with those found in the villages. He must have often visited Samaria to sell his wool, and seen the degeneracy that had overtaken the capital. Amos was not a prophet by descent. He did not belong to a prophetic guild. He was not a professional religious leader. He was a man, who, while carrying on his ordinary work, was filled with the urge to declare the message of God to the people of his times.

Let pupils read the book of Amos and gather from it all the biographical material they can (1 : 1; 3 : 12; 7 : 10-17; Chapters 7-9, for descriptions of the visions of Amos, through which he obtained some of his messages).

### 4. *An Analysis of the Contents of the Book.*

1. Chapter 1 : 1-2. The prefix giving biographical details.
2. Chapters 1 : 3-2 : 5. The sins of Israel's neighbours.
3. Chapter 2 : 6-16. The sin and punishment of Israel.
4. Chapters 3-6. A full statement of Israel's sins and punishment.

(There are three sections in this part, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapters 5 and 6.)

5. Chapters 7, 8, 9 : 1-8. The visions of Amos.  
(Note the biographical material in Chapter 7, verses 10-17.)
6. Chapter 9 : 9-15. The restoration of Israel.  
This is probably an appendix added to the book after the exile.

#### 5. *The Teaching of the Book.*

Let pupils, after careful reading of the book for themselves, make a summary of the teaching under the following heads:—

1. The sins in Israel which Amos condemned.
2. His ideas on the religion popular with the people at the time.
3. His teaching on the punishment given by God.

Get pupils to discuss whether any of these sins which Amos condemned in Israel are to be found in India today. Does God still punish nations for their sins?

The main messages of Amos are:

1. Jehovah controls the whole world. He is the God of the whole world and not simply of the nation of Israel. Other nations besides Israel will be punished for their wickedness.
2. Jehovah is righteous. The reason why God would punish Israel was because the people, and especially the rulers and wealthy, were unjust, oppressive and immoral. True religion and morality or righteousness are inseparable.
3. Religion was not just a matter of ritual, sacrifices, rites and ceremonies. It was something which inevitably resulted in good and righteous living.

#### 6. *Relating the Book to the Religious Development of the Jews.*

The emphasis of Amos on what was moral, was of the greatest importance in the religious development of the

Hebrews 'In fact it may be said to have settled for all subsequent time what religion in its essential essence is. In Amos's time, in Israel and beyond it, religion meant little more than culture . . . People brought Jehovah their offerings at the appropriate times, and in the appropriate ways. But it never occurred to them that their lives should be morally different because of their communion with God. Religion was the same thing as ritual, and that, Amos made it clear, was the fundamental fallacy. Amos was an out-and-out moralist . . . Religion for him meant justice and righteousness and nothing else, he thought, really mattered.' <sup>1</sup>

Thus Amos stands at the beginning of the line of prophets who stood for the essentials of religion, and for the line of development which ultimately led to Jesus. His was not in any way a final message which contained all truth. But he laid the foundation without which no real advance could have been made.

#### *7. Relating the Book to the Teaching of Jesus Christ.*

Get pupils to see if they can find any parallels in the teaching of Jesus with the teaching of Amos about the sins of Israel.

Discuss the question of whether Jesus would have endorsed what Amos had to say about ritual and real religion.

Discuss the question of how the teaching of Jesus went beyond that of Amos.

#### *8. Lessons from the Book for our time.*

1. An examination of our religion in relation to its outwardness and inwardness. Does ritual play too great a part in our religion at the expense of a practical result in life and character?

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Prophets of the Bible', *H. Cook*, S.C.M., p. 43.

2. God requires social and economic justice of a nation. Do we today sufficiently realize this? Are the sins against which Amos brought the word of God present in our modern nations? What would be the word of Amos to the world today? Would he pronounce against the capitalists of our day the same doom which he pronounced against the capitalists of his own day?

3. Discuss the question of whether Amos would be in favour of a democratic system in state, social life, and economic life.

4. The true basis of greatness in a nation must be righteousness. This is implicit in the teaching of Amos. Does the modern world need this teaching? What difference to nations would it make if it were acted on?

## PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

As we have already seen, the revelation of God and His will of which we have an account in the Bible is a revelation which has come gradually, with increasing clearness, and with increasing knowledge. This, after all, is a perfectly natural thing and in accordance with the methods of God. His ways of dealing with us are what we might call educational. The child is not so made that when he is small he can understand everything or all that he can understand when he grows up. He has to live through a process of development, and to progress in body, mind and spirit. He has to learn, and he has to begin with simple beginnings. We do not start in to teach a child the differential calculus, or the atomic theory, or the difference between materialism and a spiritual philosophy. We know perfectly well that the small child cannot possibly understand these things. Thus we begin with the simple elementary things, and gradually, as he progresses, more and more fields of knowledge open out before him, and he gains greater and greater insight into God's world, and the way in which God works in it. In the same way, the child progresses in the knowledge of God, and from a very simple faith, which, of course, always remains with him, progresses to a systematization of his knowledge of God which we call theology. But we do not start in to try to teach a child the doctrine of the Trinity. At least, we do not do so if we are wise.

In exactly the same way, God, who is the great Teacher, has dealt with the race. We see with especial clarity His

dealings with man, in the history of the Jews. That is one of the important things about the Bible. It shows us how God gradually revealed Himself to a nation, and through them to the world at large. There is in this, of course, no question of any change in God. It is simply a matter of men gaining an increasing knowledge of God. Just as the knowledge which a child gains when he goes to the University is substantially the same as it was when he was in the primary school, and the change is in the child, and in his power of understanding, so with the human race. God was and is the same. Man's power to understand has improved and developed. Nor is this to say that man has got this increasing knowledge of God through his own efforts. The revelation comes from God, and the initiative is God's. It is, of course, absolutely essential that man should do his part. God is helpless unless man is prepared and ready and striving to receive the revelation. But God tempers the knowledge He gives to the condition of mankind, and to the stage which mankind has reached. Thus we have what we call progressive revelation, and in the Bible it is quite easy to see how man, and the Jews in particular, gradually progressed in their understanding of God and how He gradually led them and prepared the way for the culmination of His revelation in Jesus Christ. This is one reason, incidentally, why it is important to know the history of the writing of the books in the Old Testament. It makes the Bible very much more real to us if we know something of the historical order of the writings, and of the sections and documents used in the compiling of different books, as we can then understand clearly the gradual progress that was made, and can see the hand of God working in and through the history of the Jews.

By the time boys and girls reach the adolescent stage, it is time for us to give them an idea of how this gradual development in the religion of the Hebrews took place, and

of the gradual progress they, or the highest elements among them, that is, the prophets, made in their ideas about God and in their relationships with God. The best way to do this is to take a brief bird's-eye view of the whole development. This, in the first place, with boys and girls of 13 or 14, should be only a very brief summary, touching the main points. Later at the age of 15 and 16 the same thing can be done again, in greater detail. The suggested course which follows is the type of course which could be taken at this later stage. For the earlier stage, only the main items should be dealt with.

In later adolescence it is a most fruitful type of work to take up the study of some topic, and work through the Old Testament, or at least through the relevant parts, tracing the developments that took place, and the changes that came with a fuller knowledge of God, always linking it up with the final culmination in Jesus Christ. Indeed such a procedure as this is necessary if we are going to be able to help our students to understand Jesus Christ and His thought and teaching. There are numbers of such topics. An illustration of how they may be dealt with is given in the suggested course on Universalism. Other topics which can be dealt with similarly are, the Idea of God in the Old Testament, War, the Idea of Man in the Old Testament, the Development of the Idea of Immortality in the Old Testament, the Development of Ideas of Right and Wrong, Religion and Ritual, Religion and Morality. Some of these are much more extensive than others, and of course, only one or two could be done with any one class. But even one such study will be invaluable in giving to young people a true idea of the Old Testament and of what our attitude to it should be.

There follow two suggested courses. One is a course on the religious development of the Hebrews from earliest times until after the Exile. The other is a course on a topic, the topic of Universalism. Some such course as the

first, whether in greater or less detail, should be done before any topical study is taken up.

## THE RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE OF THE HEBREWS

*(A course on the Religious History and development of the Hebrews)*

The aim of the course:

To give a general and bird's-eye view of the phases through which the Hebrews passed as they developed from a nomadic tribe to a nation, and of their general religious development as God gradually revealed Himself to them, and as they grew in understanding of Him.

The main points to be brought out during the course:

1. The fact that the Hebrews were pre-eminently a religious people and that with them there was no division of life into religious and secular aspects. Their religion was a religion for the whole of Life.
2. From this it follows that in a study of their history we also study the working of God in history, and of a people who consciously saw the hand of God in all the events of their history.
3. The gradually increasing emphasis on morality and on its inseparableness from religion.
4. The increasing sense of national vocation in the Hebrews. The definite belief that, as a people, they were called of God for His special purposes.
5. The fact that the whole development in religious ideas and practice, particularly through the prophets, was a preparation for the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It was not mere chance that Jesus came into the world as a Jew and not as a Greek or a Roman.

The stages of the Pilgrimage:

1. Patriarchal Times.
2. The Mosaic Period.
3. The Canaan Settlement.
4. The Monarchy.
5. The Prophetic Beginnings.
6. The fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Exile.  
The development in Judah.
7. The Period after the Exile.

1. *Patriarchal Times.*

(1) Go through, briefly, the history, as given in Genesis, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. This will be a résumé of what will have been done before when dealing with O.T. characters by the biographical method.

(2) The primitive religion of the Hebrews closely resembled that of their Semitic kinsfolk. (See Joshua 24 : 14-16, where Israel is told to put away the gods their fathers served beyond the river). This resemblance is also seen from some of the customs and usages which survive in later times, e.g. the 'high places' which were very common in most cities and villages. (See 2 Kings 17 : 9-11, also 1 Samuel 9, where we have a description of a high place with its altar and shrine, buildings for sacred meals and for the guardian of the shrine to live in.)

In the earliest times the worship of the Hebrews was connected with certain sacred spots, which were looked on as holy places where God was specially present, and where He could be approached. Sacrifices were made in such places, where there were natural objects, such as trees or stones, or where pillars or piles of stones were erected. (See Genesis 12 : 6-9; 28 : 16-22; 35 : 6-7.)

We find that Abraham's worship is usually connected with trees, that of Jacob with stones, and that of Isaac and Ishmael with wells or fountains. (Look up passages to confirm this.)

Later, for the natural object, a stone pillar was substituted (for the natural stone) or a pole (for the tree), and these symbolized the presence of God in the place. Thus Joshua set up twelve stones at Gilgal (Joshua 4 : 19-24). We read of Hezekiah removing 'groves' which were these 'pole' symbols (2 Kings 18 : 4) and also of Josiah doing the same thing (2 Kings 23 : 6). In Deuteronomy, the writer denounces them (Deut. 12 : 3; 16 : 21). Images were also used in primitive times, as we see from the continual efforts of reformers to get rid of them. See the same passages as above. We read of 'teraphim' in Genesis. (See the story of Rachel and the teraphim in Genesis 31. See also Judges 17 : 5; 1 Sam. 19 : 12-17.)

With the Caananites, human sacrifice, especially of children, was a custom in connection with the worship at holy places. This practice was also found among the Hebrews. But in the story of Abraham and Isaac, told in Genesis 22, we have an account of how the Hebrews were taught that this was wrong. But we find that the practice of human child-sacrifice persisted, in spite of the early realization that it was not pleasing to God. This shows that it was a fairly firmly entrenched practice among the Semites. (See Leviticus 18 : 21; 20 : 2; Deut. 12 : 29-32; 18 : 10, where we have express prohibitions of child-sacrifice.) 2 Kings 3 : 26-27 shows how the practice existed among the neighbours of the Hebrews. The story of Jephthah's daughter, Judges 11 : 29-40 shows how it lingered in Israel, and in the wicked reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh, the custom was revived (2 Chron. 28 : 1-3; 33 : 1-6). Even in the time of Ezekiel it existed (Ezekiel 16 : 20-21; 20 : 31. See also Jeremiah 7 : 31; 19 : 5.) But from the time of Abraham it was recognized that this practice was wrong, and this is an example of the beginning of a purer religion starting from Abraham.

Among the parochial Hebrews, marriage is a bargain with the bride's father (see Genesis 29 : 15-30). The wife was

really a superior slave, and the husband could divorce her whenever he pleased (see Deut. 24 : 1-4). The power of the father over the family is complete. He can sell his children (see Ex. 21 : 7), choose their wives for them (see Genesis, Chap. 24), or could sacrifice his children (see the story of Isaac and Abraham and of Jephthah's daughter, Judges, Chap. 11).

Of this preliminary stage in Hebrew religion the patriarchs may be regarded as types. Abraham, in particular, can scarcely be looked on as the personal founder of a pure religion of revelation. He is rather the prototype of all that is highest in the old Semitic religion of all that was best fitted to serve as a foundation for a great moral and religious development. Abraham is, in fact, a representative of Semitism in two points especially ; in his strong consciousness of God, and in the impulse which moved him to separate himself from an alien and more highly developed civilization . . . . . In a spirit of awe, of receptivity, of submission to the leadings of God, he passes from, land to land, dwelling in tents, rearing his altar for sacrifice beneath the open sky, shunning the tumult of cities, and sojourning in the broad and silent spaces of the wilderness. This tendency to withdraw from the centres of civilization, and to prefer a life of primitive simplicity is illustrated by the narrative of the call of Abraham (Genesis, Chap. 12). Such deliberate abandonment of the idolatrous and highly developed culture of Babylon is typical of the moral intensity of the pastoral Semites. It marked them out as the people of revelation. It separated them from the corruptions of polytheism. It was what the N.T. represents it to be— an act of faith, in which was involved the possibility of a special and unique relationship to God. The name of Abraham thus stands for a symbol of the fact that in the soil of a purely natural religion, the Divine Spirit was at work from the beginning, awakening a higher consciousness

of God, and laying the foundation of a movement which was destined to find its climax in the perfect union of man with God in Jesus Christ.' <sup>1</sup>

## 2. *The Mosaic Period.*

### Résumé of the Life of Moses.

Moses gave Jahveh to the Hebrews as their God. Jahveh was first associated with Mount Sinai. He was a mountain God.

See Ex. 3 : 1-6; 3 : 6, 15; 6 : 6; Moses, commission, Ex. 3 : 11-18.

Jahveh would not leave Sinai to go with the Hebrews to Canaan, but His angel would go. Ex. 23 : 20-23; 32 : 34; 33 : 1-3.

There was a special relation with Jahveh. Ex. 6 : 1-8.

This relation required that Jahveh should be worshipped as the God of the Hebrews, and that He alone should be worshipped. But it implied that the other nations had their gods who, however, were not as powerful as Jahveh. There was a covenant between Jahveh and the Hebrews. Ex. 34 : 4-8; Amos 2 : 9; 3 : 1; Hosea 2 : 16; 11 : 1; 12 : 13; 13 : 4, 5.

This relationship was one requiring righteousness on the part of the people. It was not so much a matter of ritual as of obedience to the command of God. We have these in the ten commandments (Ex. 20).

See 'The Book of the Covenant', Ex. Chapters 21-23.

Because of this covenant the Hebrews were a people set apart for Jahveh. We have here the beginning of the sense of a special mission. Ex. 19 : 1-6.

Rules for worship were laid down. Ex. 25 : 2-22; 32 : 19-24, 30-35.

There was the ark and the tabernacle, but no image of Jehovah. Amos (5 : 25) tells us that there were no sacrifices

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Religion of Israel', *Ottley*, pp. 23-24.

in the wilderness; also Jeremiah tells us the same thing (Jeremiah 7 : 22). The whole worship was very simple, but there were continual relapses into idolatry.

In this period we find the following ideas of Jahveh.

He was a mountain God connected with Mount Sinai or Horeb.

Ex. 3 : 1; Judges 5 : 4-5; 1 Kings 19 : 8; Deut. 33 : 2.

He was a storm God.

Ex. 19 : 18; 20 : 18; 1 Sam. 2 : 10; 7 : 10; Judges 5 : 4; Psalm 18 : 13-14.

He was a God of war.

Ex. 15 : 3; Joshua 10 : 13-14; 1 Sam. 17 : 45; Psalm 18 : 34.

He was a tribal God; that is the God of the Hebrews especially, and not of the surrounding peoples.

Ex. 23 : 22; Joshua 11 : 20; Ex. 17 : 16.

The work of Moses can be summed up in two ways:

1. He taught that God works in history. Jahveh had brought Israel out of Egypt, and, in this deliverance, was revealed to Israel. He was a gracious God who had delivered His people from slavery, and so had established a special relationship with them.
2. Moses taught the importance in religion of righteousness, a note that we find right down through all subsequent prophets. The moral code Moses gave was a bond between God and His people. It was this ethical basis of the religion of Moses, that made it possible for it to develop into a universal religion.

For a description of Moses' religious experience, see Exodus 32 : 30-32; 33 : 11, 18-23. Note that God is spoken of as though He were a man, but this is just a metaphor used, and is not to be taken literally.

### 3. *The Canaan Settlement.*

When the Hebrews invaded the land of Canaan, they found the land in the possession of people who had been there for hundreds of years. They lived in walled cities, and possessed considerable wealth. In this land, by war, slaughter and enslaving the inhabitants, the Hebrews tried to make a home for themselves. They sometimes conquered. Sometimes they were conquered. Local heroes had their successes. Sometimes the tribes combined together and heard a summons to an advance in religion. Give a brief sketch of the history of the Hebrews down to the time when Saul was made king, that is down to the ministry of Samuel. Consider the following incidents, and the light they throw on the religious thought and practice of the times:—

1. The execution of Achan. Joshua 7 : 19–26.
2. The story of Jephthah's daughter. Judges 11 : 30ff.
3. The story of Micah. Judges, Chapters 17 and 18.
4. The song of Deborah. Judges 5.

This period shows a process of compromise with the Canaanites. The Hebrews often assimilated the worship of Jehovah to the worship of the Canaanite gods. This is the same process as we see in the villages of India, where Hinduism has influenced first Islam and later, Sikhism. It is found too, again and again with Christian village communities, where the pull of the non-Christian environment has resulted in attempted assimilation. The Canaan settlement showed a syncretism. The Hebrews and Canaanites lived side by side (Judges 1; 19 : 12). They intermarried (Judges 3 : 56). But Jehovah was transferred to Palestine. That is, He was looked on as having the special connection with Palestine that He had formerly had with Sinai. But the old Mosaic religion was kept alive.

The work of Samuel:

Samuel was afterwards thought of as on a level with Moses. Jeremiah 15 : 1 ; Psalm 99 : 6.

He was specially raised up to keep alive in Israel the true knowledge of God's will (He was a Nazarite). Amos 2 : 9-12 ; 1 Samuel 1 : 11.

He was a prophet. 1 Samuel 3 : 20-4 : 1.

Samuel was the founder of the monarchy. 1 Samuel 9 : 15-10 : 7.

He achieved national unity under Jehovah. 1 Samuel 12 : 1-15.

In this period we see how the altered conditions of the Hebrews affected their religion, especially the religion of the common people. But we see also, how the higher religion survived, and gradually made way against the syncretic tendencies.

#### 4. *The Monarchy.*

Give a brief description of the history of Saul, David and Solomon, and of the division of the kingdom.

We now find the prophet taking the position which he held till the exile, that of the conscience of the nation. See the story of David and Nathan. 2 Sam. 12 : 1-14.

From the time of David we find a steady growth of the idea of the special mission of Israel. Great hopes were placed in David. 2 Sam. 3 : 18 ; 5 : 2 ; 7 : 5-17ff.

The rule of the king and the rule of God were connected. The king's throne was Jehovah's throne. 1 Chron. 29 : 23.

The building of the Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon was an event of importance. (Note, in passing, the advance indicated by the fact that David was not permitted to build it because he was a man of war. 1 Chron. 22 : 6-11.) By the building of the temple, the worship of Jehovah was firmly established in Jerusalem, and so paved the way for the future development of Judaism.

In 1 Kings 11 : 7ff. we have a description of Solomon building shrines for other gods. The author reflects the opinions of the time in which he wrote, on this subject. To Solomon and his contemporaries this was a natural proceeding, for they still thought of a god, including their own, as being connected with his own country only. And if he was to be worshipped in another country than his own, there had to be special arrangements in the way of shrines, made on the foreign soil. We see the same idea in Naaman's desire to take some of the soil of Israel back to his own country so that he could worship Jehovah there (2 Kings 5 : 17). Thus David also looks on expulsion from his native country as forcing him to worship other gods, that is, the gods of the country to which he went. Jehovah could be worshipped only in Palestine (1 Sam. 26 : 19).

Read Psalms 3, 4, 18, 24, which were probably written during this period, and so give an idea of the religious ideas of the period.

For descriptions of the popular religion towards the end of this period, see Micah 6 : 6-7 and Jeremiah 7 : 9-10.

Read the story of Elijah and of his struggle against Ahab. 1 Kings 16 : 29-18 : 46; 1 Kings 21.

Elijah carried on the teaching that there was a vital connection between the religion of Jehovah and social righteousness. He stood for the purity of the religion of Jehovah, against the influence of the religions of the surrounding peoples. He taught the fact of God's judgment of sin, and that God might use the enemies of Israel as instruments of His judgment (1 Kings 19 : 13-17). We see again how, in the case of Naboth, the prophet stood out as the conscience of the nation. In Elijah, we see the beginning of the struggle of the prophets to stand for pure religion, and for the line of advance according to God's will, with both the authorities represented by the court and

the priests on the one hand, and against the popular religion of the people on the other hand.

#### 5. *The Prophetic beginnings.*

Résumé of the lives of Elijah and Elisha.

Amos:

The whole book of Amos should be read. From it we get an idea of the moral and religious state of the Hebrew people, and we see the re-action of Amos to this state of affairs.

He emphasized social righteousness, the inseparableness of morality and religion. He condemned the economic system with its injustice, and he stood for a simpler, purer form of non-ritualistic religion, which, he claimed, was a return to the religion of the wilderness.

Hosea:

In Hosea we see an advance on the teaching of Amos, in that Hosea, through his own experience with his wife, realized the love of God and His willingness to forgive.

In Hosea we see the following points:—

1. His own experience. His wife deserted him, lived an evil life, yet he forgave her and took her back (Hosea 1 : 2-9; Chapter 3). (Compare this with the parable of the Prodigal Son.)
2. The cause of Israel's disasters was her failure to understand her real relationship to God. The love of God for Israel was the greatest fact in her history. (Hosea 11 : 1; 12 : 9; 13 : 4; 11 : 1-4; 13 : 9-10; 2 : 8.) But Israel was unfaithful and spurned the love of God. (Hosea 6 : 4-11; 7 : 11-16; 8 : 11-14; 6 : 4-10.)

God would therefore punish her (Hosea 13 : 14-16; Chapter 9.)

3. God would ultimately redeem Israel. (Hosea, Chapter 14; 11 : 8-11; 6 : 1-3; 2 : 14-23.)

In Hosea we see that the highest Jewish thought had reached the position that religion is a personal relationship of love, for which externals of ritual and ceremonies could be no substitute. God is one who forgives and takes back the erring sinner, just as Hosea took back his wife.

But the Northern Kingdom would not listen to these two prophets and it was destroyed. (2 Kings 17 : 1-18; Chapter 23.)

6. *From the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Exile. (Judah).*

Give a brief account of the history of Judah from the time of Hezekiah to that of Zedekiah.

In this period we have the work of the first Isaiah (Isaiah, Chapters 1-39). Micah, Jeremiah, and the reform under Josiah represented by the book of Deuteronomy.

Isaiah:

The teaching of Isaiah can be summed up as follows:—

1. The holiness of God. (Is., Chapter 6; 5 : 13-25.)
2. Against oppression and injustice. (Is. 5 : 1-25; 1 : 16-20; 33 : 13-16.)
3. Faith in God is true political wisdom. (Is. 2 : 1-5; Chapter 12; 14 : 29-32; 8 : 11-18; Chapter 25; 26 : 1-4.)
4. The doctrine of the remnant. Even though the nation as a whole were to be destroyed for its sins there would always be a remnant left who would be faithful to God, and this remnant would hand down the true religion of Jehovah. (Is. 1 : 9; 10 : 20-23; 7 : 3) the meaning of Shear-jashub is, a remnant shall return (6 : 13).
5. The supremacy of Jehovah over all nations and men, and His final triumph. (Is. 26 : 5-16; 34 : 1-5, Chapter 35.)

Micah:

The prophet of the poor.

Have the first three chapters of Micah read, and get pupils to make a list of the sins against which he preaches. Let them consider whether any of these are present in India today, and especially whether they are present in the Christian community. In Micah 6 : 6-9, we have his summary of what true religion should be, and in 5 : 7-8; 7 : 18, we find again the doctrine of the remnant.

Josiah's Reformation:

This is connected with the discovery of 'the book of the law'. This probably consisted of Deuteronomy, Chapters 5-26 and 28. It was possibly composed by members of the prophetic party during the bad times of the reign of Manasseh. Its object was evidently to revive the principles of the religion of Moses, and to strengthen the hands of the prophetic party. Therefore the chief feature of the book is that it is based on the ten commandments, and emphasizes the superiority of morality over ceremonial features in religion. The relationship between Jehovah and Israel is one of love, and therefore the Hebrews ought to respond to God with love. It reflects the teachings of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Jeremiah:

Jeremiah came on the scene just before the reformation of Josiah and continued his work until the final capture of Jerusalem under Zedekiah, and the carrying off of the majority of the Jews into exile in Babylon. He had a difficult time as he remained true to the word of God which came to him, and therefore opposed the policies of the court. He was looked on as a defeatist, a friend of the enemies of Judah, and therefore suffered severe persecution.

His main teachings were:

God punishes sin whether it be the sin of the individual or of a nation (Jer. 4 : 14-18; 5 : 7-9, 25-29; 9 : 1-11).

But God is merciful and will forgive if people repent (Jer. 7 : 1-7; 8 : 4-12).

Like his predecessors he was against the institutional religion of his time (Jer. 7 : 21-28; 7: 2-16; 14 : 10-12).

Get pupils to read the book and find out the sins Jeremiah condemned. His great contribution was his teaching on the New Covenant in which he emphasized the personal relationship between the individual and God. He taught that the individual was responsible to God (Jer. 31 : 22-34).

### *7. The Period after the Exile.*

The outstanding figure of this period during which the Old Testament reaches its greatest heights, is that of the second Isaiah. We know nothing about his life, but have his teaching in Chapters 40-55 of the book of Isaiah. For details of his teaching, see the course on the Prophets, pages 166 ff., and the course on Universalism, pages 147 f. To this period also belong the books of Ruth and Jonah (see pp. 118 ff.). It was the teaching and ideas of these prophets that Jesus Christ took up and developed.

When this course has been finished, the teacher should give a brief summary of the pilgrimage of the Hebrews, tracing the high points in the journey from the religion of the Patriarchs to that of the second Isaiah and Jonah. He should try to bring out as clearly as possible the fundamentals at each stage which made the following stage possible, and to show how the final position rose naturally from the first beginnings. And he should also bring out clearly the guidance of God right through the whole religious journey.

The course, it must be remembered, is only a suggestion. According to the needs of their pupils teachers may give less or more than is contained in the course. But the main features of the pilgrimage will remain the same, whether

what is given is an elementary survey, to be done briefly and quickly, or whether it be a more detailed study.

## UNIVERSALISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

'The Exile gave birth to two distinct ideals of the future of Israel—to the priestly ideal of Ezekiel, with a nationalism centred in the restored temple and its ritual, sharply separated from the outside world, and to the prophetic ideal of Deutero-Isaiah, which anticipated the conversion of all other nations to the religion of Israel, through the missionary work of the Servant of Yahweh. These two contrasted ideals, which we may call nationalism, and universalism, run through the whole of post-exilic Judaism, but from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah onwards it is the former which gains in strength, and eventually issues in the post-Biblical Judaism, "a nation which could not live and could not die, a Church which did not free itself from the national life, and therefore remained a sect". On the other hand, the universalistic tendencies which sprang from the monotheism and morality of the Old Testament religion were maintained through the propaganda of the Jewish Dispersion, and finally found their triumphant outlet in Christianity.'<sup>1</sup>

It is the object of this course to study the parts of the Old Testament where we find this missionary idea which Jesus later took up.

1. We find suggestions of the missionary function of Israël and of the universalist idea in Isaiah.

See Isaiah 29 : 24-25; 25 : 6-8.

Later Malachi contrasts the religion of some among the Gentiles with the corrupt religion of the priests of Israel. This religion of the Gentiles is acceptable to the One God. Malachi 1 : 11-14.

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<sup>1</sup> The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, *H. Wheeler Robinson*, p. 206. Duckworth & Co.

## 2. *The Book of Ruth.*

This book was written after the Exile as a protest against the growing exclusiveness of Jewish nationalism. The unknown author wished to show in his story the truth that the Jews were not the only nation which Jehovah loved, and that not one race or nation, but the whole of mankind, belongs to Him.

Read the book and at the same time read the book of Esther and contrast the spirit of the two books.

## 3. *The Servant passages of Deutero-Isaiah.*

### (a) Isaiah 42 : 1-7.

Read this passage and note whose servant it is that is described. Who chose him and to whom does he listen?

What is the service to which he is called?

Note that the word rendered 'judgment' means justice, equity and civil right, which is the result of the true religion of Jehovah. The work of the servant, the remnant in Israel, was then to spread abroad through the nations the righteousness of God, and to show how that righteousness should affect the life of the people.

How does this apply to the function of the 'remnant' in India today? Can this purpose be carried out if we say that we should care simply for the souls of men, and that it is not the business of the Church to concern itself with other parts of life?

The labours of the remnant in Israel prepared for the coming of Christ. Are our labours resulting in the coming of Christ to India?

What are the methods of service?

To lift up, in verse 2, means to be loud, to cause his voice to be heard in the street, means to advertise himself. Compare this with the second temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4 : 5-7).

The methods of the servant are to be methods of tenderness, sympathy and understanding.

In dealing with a bruised reed, a fallen brother or sister, should we use the method of Jesus (John 8 : 1-11) ?

Do the judgments of our Church courts sometimes quench the smoking flax ? Does our penal system do so ?

What is the power behind the service ?

Read verses 5 and 6.

(b) Isaiah 49 : 1-6 ; 50 : 4-9.

The servant as prophet.

He has a definite call (verse 1).

Do we believe that God has a definite purpose for every one of us ? How can we know the call of God when it comes to us ? Refer to the experience of Elijah (1 Kings 19).

He has a challenging message. (See verse 2.)

C. F. Andrews quoted Mr. Gandhi as saying that, 'the rose needs nothing except its perfume and its beauty to give its own message of joy to mankind. If the perfume and beauty of the true Christian life were everywhere apparent, then mere words would not be needed to recommend it.'

Do you agree with this, especially the last clause ? How did Jesus declare His message ?

The servant's message was like a sword. Is it sometimes necessary to give offence with our message or should we always try to avoid giving offence at all costs ?

Is every Christian called on to declare a message, to be a prophet ?

The servant has a sure faith in God. (See verse 4.)

('Judgment' here means 'right' or 'cause'.)

The servant had faith to believe that in spite of all setbacks, God and His good would triumph in the end ? Do we believe this ?

Notice that when faithful ones think they have failed, God sets them a higher task (verse 6).

Would it not be better for the Christian community in India if we were to get our eyes off our weaknesses and

keep them on God and on the great work He has been waiting for us to do?

The servant has a capacity to listen (see 50 : 4, 5).

How can we listen to God?

The servant is ready to suffer (50 : 6).

A prophet always suffers. Do you agree with this? Why does a prophet suffer? If we do the work of prophets in India are we likely to suffer, and if so, how?

(c) Isaiah 52 : 13-53 ; 12.

The servant as Martyr.

In this passage the author sets forth the redemptive power of suffering for others, a principle which Jesus took up and exemplified in His life and death.

The principle according to which the servant lived and died was to bear all the evil that was done to him, and, in return, to love and serve to the utmost those who were persecuting him.

This means to serve rather than to insist on our rights, to suffer rather than to inflict suffering, to die rather than to stand up for ourselves and our rights.

Is this a principle according to which we can live as individuals? Is it a principle according to which the Christian community can live in India? What difference would it make to the political policies of the Christian community if we lived according to this principle?

This was the method by which the servant was to do the work of God. He was to be the *suffering* servant. His suffering was to be redemptive. This was in direct contrast with the other trend of thought, that the Jews were to conquer other nations in order to establish Jehovah's kingdom. It was this principle of dying for others, instead of killing others, that led Jesus to the Cross.

In the light of this what should be our attitude to war? Is it practicable to act on this principle in modern India and in the modern world? Compare the method of the

suffering servant with Mr. Gandhi's method of *Satyagraha* and notice the difference, a radical one, between the two ideas. *Satyagraha* is passive while the servant's method was not simply passively suffering, but at the same time actively serving and loving.

4. *The Book of Jonah.*

(See pages 118 ff.)

On the conclusion of this course, the subject should be taken up with reference to New Testament developments, and the universalizing work of Jesus dealt with, and also that of Paul.

## THE PROPHETS

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Old Testament prophets in the development of the religion of Israel, and in the preparation for Christianity. And yet, unfortunately, in our Bible teaching we so often seem to neglect them altogether, or at least treat them as of much less importance than the history and the doings of the various kings, who 'did evil in the sight of the Lord'. It is not too much to say that the main message of the Old Testament is to be found in the prophets, and that a study of the prophets is the most fruitful study in connection with the Old Testament that our pupils can undertake.

It was the prophets, from the time of Elijah onwards, who stood out against a popular religion, especially in the northern kingdom, which was always in danger of absorbing, and being absorbed by, the cults of the land into which the Hebrews had come. They stood for purity, holiness, righteousness and sincerity in religion. They therefore gave the Hebrew religion that bent which resulted in its becoming the preparation for the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The prophets were a purifying element in the land, standing for the true religion of Jehovah as against a religion of ritual and conventional practices. A study of the canonical prophets is therefore essential for a real appreciation of the message of the Old Testament.

This study is the more important for our day, because the canonical prophets, whose messages we have in the Old Testament, are, in almost all cases, men who broke away from the guilds of the prophets, and, though in a minority,

sometimes, as in the case of Micaiah, of one, gave what they knew to be the word of the Lord. In the early days, the prophets worked in bands. Together they fell into ecstasies, and together they prophesied, or one prophesied in the name of the band. But they worked as a band and not as individuals.

'Ecstasies tended to be gregarious and usually appeared and acted in bands. This was partly because the ecstasy was held to be infectious. It will be remembered that in 1 Samuel 10 : 9-13, we have an account of Saul meeting a company of Nebi'im (prophets) coming down a hill at Gibeah. The ecstasy fell on him also, and roused the wonder of all his acquaintances. He was liable to attacks of the same kind all his life. His first military exploit was due to the fact that 'the breath of God rushed upon him' a technical phrase for the access of the ecstasy (1 Sam. 11 : 6). The same spirit in later years became his bane, for the activity of the spirit was not yet moralized, and the ravings from which he sought relief through David's music are described by the verb which denotes ecstatic behaviour (1 Sam. 18 : 10). Once at least his wild actions included the stripping off of all his clothes and lying naked for twenty-four hours (1 Sam. 19 : 24). The Nebi'im who are consulted by Ahab (1 Kings 22 : 5-28) appear altogether and act practically as one man. The prophets of Baal are four hundred in number and work together (1 Kings 18 : 20-29). Usually the manifestations of the mob grew in intensity, until one would stand out from the rest and give a common message, either by symbol or speech or both. The case of Zedekiah among Ahab's prophets comes naturally to mind.' <sup>1</sup>

It was from bands such as these that the canonical prophets developed. Even in later times, when Isaiah and

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<sup>1</sup> Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel, *T. H. Robinson*, Duckworth, pp. 31-32.

Jeremiah were prophesying, these bands still existed and in strength. But the canonical prophets had broken with the old method, and, as I have said, they were men who, as individuals, had separated themselves from the band, and gave a message which was different from that of the rest. We see this very distinctly in the case of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22. Thus the canonical prophets stand for a giving of the message of God in the teeth of public opinion, and of conventional practice, and in spite of the hostility and opposition of their fellow prophets. In other words, they refused to be bound by professional etiquette, or so-called 'loyalty', or by popular orthodoxy. It is needless to point out how the study of the work of such men can be of benefit to us in these modern times.

In making such a study we must be sure in the first place that our pupils understand what is meant by a prophet, and what his work was.

#### 1. *Prophecy.*

What is the definition of a prophet? It is *not* primarily one who foretells the future, and the prevalence of this mistaken meaning of the word and of the work of a prophet, has been responsible for a great deal of the misuse of the Bible. The 'pro' in the word means not 'beforehand', but 'in place of' 'for'. A prophet is one who speaks for, or in place of, God. When Moses shrinks from the task to which God was calling him he is told the Aaron his brother will be his prophet to speak for him. As Aaron was the spokesman of Moses so is the prophet the spokesman of God, a preacher declaring the Divine will. Prediction, as we shall see later is only a small and incidental part of his work.

The early prophets were not mere visionaries living apart from their kind. The prophet in Israel was never that. His message was always closely connected with the events of his day, and this is a fact that we must always keep well in

mind. The prophet never hesitated to apply his teaching to the needs of the time in the most pointed and practical fashion.

Thus it is of supreme importance to remember that the prophet is a man of his own time and addresses the people of his own time, and not primarily, later generations. The questions with which he is concerned are questions of importance to the people to whom he speaks. His message was never one which might just as well have been delivered at some other time to other people in different circumstances. He is sent by God to a particular group of people with the message needed at that particular hour. The reason why the prophetic books of the Old Testament are difficult for us to understand today is just that the message is wrapped up in its historical setting, so that, to appreciate the point of it, it is necessary to take oneself back, as well as possible, into the times when it was given.

The work of a prophet used to be regarded as almost exclusively predictive, and his religious and moral teaching was largely overlooked. In correcting this false impression there is, of course, no need to fly to the other extreme, and ignore the predictive element which there is in prophecy, as there is in all religious preaching. Amos and Isaiah predicted the downfall of the Northern Kingdom, the former 40 years before it took place and when it appeared at the height of prosperity (just as one could predict, in general terms, the coming of the present war as soon as the last one was over, and the so-called peace made). Isaiah in the face of the advance of Sennacherib, guaranteed the inviolability of Jerusalem (Isa. 37 : 33-35). Jeremiah, on the other hand, in a later time, foretold the downfall of Jerusalem. Though such cases of definite prediction are not common there is no doubt that great prophets had an insight into the near future. But their prophecies were not like the work of fortune-tellers. They were not writing history beforehand, or trying to make a map of what was

going to happen. What the prophets did was to cast upon the future the light which came from their knowledge of the divine will. They believed that God was at work in the world, and that in the world of such a God certain causes must produce certain results. Their prophecies were moral syllogisms (cf. Micah 3 : 9-12). The world is not what it ought to be, and the day must come when the will of God shall prevail. Their political foresight was determined by their spiritual insight. The prophets saw further into the future by seeing more deeply beneath the surface of the present.

Often the hope of the prophets in the coming of a Kingdom of God centres in an Anointed Redeemer, a Messiah, and in their Messianic prophecies the Christian Church has seen the promise of the coming of the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. Once it was commonly taught that the O.T. contained the life of Christ, written as it were, centuries before. It used to be the practice to argue for the divinity of Christ from the fulfilment in his life of details foretold in O.T. pages. That position is no longer tenable. But although we can no longer build upon individual verses in the way our fathers did, we find instead a more impressive argument in the long movement of the religion of Israel from its crude beginnings to the climax in Jesus Christ.

The point will become clear in the examination of particular passages. There are undoubtedly passages in the O.T. which were Messianic in the intention of the writer. But as undoubtedly there are passages quoted by N.T. writers as fulfilled by Jesus which had no original Messianic reference at all. Such passages as those quoted by Matthew in 2 : 15 (which clearly refers to the Exodus) and 2 : 17 are simply associated with events in the life of Jesus through a verbal coincidence. They are examples of an allegorical or 'spiritual' treatment of scripture which was common in Judaism and in the early Church. Having found Christ in the O.T. the early Church naturally, if

uncritically, proceeded to find Him everywhere. Matthew, in particular, is eager to search out as many references as he can to demonstrate that Jesus is indeed God's promised Messiah. But we cannot believe, for example, that Jesus healed the sick in order to fulfil prophecy (Matt. 8 : 17).

The sayings of the prophets were not dark meaningless riddles to themselves and their hearers. They must have had some intelligible relation to the time. When Isaiah declared that 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a son' (Isa. 7 : 14 quoted Matt. 1 : 22) he was not referring to the birth of Jesus. A sign which was to reassure the reigning king obviously could not be an event nearly eight centuries distant. The word 'virgin' moreover in the original does not mean a virgin but merely a young woman.

But there are other passages which stand on a different footing, and which, in varying language, embody the hope of a great deliverance by the hand of God. Even in these passages the writer is building his ideal out of the materials which lie to his hand. Isaiah 53 may be taken as a crucial case. Here again, Jesus of Nazareth was not in the prophet's mind. The servant of whom he is writing had already lived and died. The immediate reference is to the nation of Israel which has suffered and even been destroyed for the time being in the exile. The prophet finds the explanation of this perplexing national calamity in God's purpose that through this suffering Israel should be the means of leading the other nations to the knowledge of God. Yet the prophet wrote more than he knew, and gave expression to a principle that had its greatest fulfilment in Jesus. These prophecies are not Messianic in the sense that the prophets are consciously picturing the actual life and career of Jesus. They are Messianic in their general spirit and outlook.

This view is confirmed by the use made of the O.T. by Jesus Himself. It is markedly different from that which puzzles us in the references of say, Matthew. Christ

regarded himself as fulfilling the O.T. in its general spirit rather than in particular detail. In the whole law and the prophets not merely in stray verses or isolated sections. He found the promise and prophecy of Himself. When he does connect a particular passage with Himself, as when He claimed at Nazareth that the prophecy of Isaiah 51 was fulfilled in Him, He quotes a passage that illustrates the spirit and character of the Messiah, and not any detailed circumstances of his life. It is in this sense, not in merely external and superficial forms of coincidence but in spirit and truth, that Jesus fulfilled the prophets.

Professor Gwatkin sums it up thus: 'The prophet's power is not in predictions of the future, though he may adventure some, nor in visions of another world if he have any, but in vivid understanding of his own age. Insight is his mark, not foresight, though marvellous foresight may come of true insight. His aim is to see the world of his own time as God sees it, to tear open its hypocrisies and self-deceits, to unmask its falsehoods to give its ambitions and achievements their true value, to trace and cherish every seed of good in it, in a word, to view it in the unchanging light of the Eternal's right and goodness. God's words are what he strives to speak, not to future ages but to the men of his own time. His words are shaped by the ideas of his own time, and by the environment of his own time. Yet his words are for all generations, not because they foretell details and paltry events but because they set out eternal truths. Therefore the prophet's message is abiding though his words must wear the dress of time.'<sup>1</sup>

We must also remember that the prophet must be taken in his place in the religious development of the Hebrew people. We cannot expect from Amos what we get from the second Isaiah, or from the first Isaiah what we get

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in 'The Meaning of the Old Testament', *H. Martin*, S.C.M., p. 96.

from the book of Jonah. The prophet, to be sure, is ahead of his times, but, due to his work and influence, the times catch up, and then succeeding prophets in their turn are vouchsafed by God a message which is ahead of their times, and so the advance goes on, as man increasingly responds to God's revealed initiative. The prophets were human. God could use them only up to a point. He could not reveal himself fully through any, though, as time went on, He could reveal Himself more fully than He could through the prophets of former days. Hence we must always remember, in dealing with the prophets, that we are dealing with men who had their place in a development, and who had their human limitations, which therefore determined the way in which God could use them.

But at the same time, the prophets were chosen by God, and they testified to the overpowering necessity of setting forth the message of God even against their own wills. Jeremiah says, 'Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay' (Jeremiah 20 : 9). They were men of peculiar sensitiveness who responded as their fellows did not to the voice and approach and search of God.

'The pre-conditions of a Divine Revelation are two: Divine initiative and human receptivity. There must be present the intention on the part of God to communicate a knowledge of Himself to man, to give Himself in loving fellowship. There must be equally the human capacity to receive and respond. It was this unique capacity for God which characterized the Hebrew prophet throughout the history of the Biblical revelation. It was this spiritual sensitivity which set him above his fellows.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Article 'God Spake unto the Fathers' in *The British Weekly*, by J. Bowman.

The Hebrew prophets were conscious of being intermediaries between God and Israel. They believed themselves to be in such contact with God, so in tune with Him, that God's purposes were theirs, and so He could use them to reveal His will. This conviction of Divine call, and of a Divine message and mission are the hall-marks of every prophet.

There is a difficulty that arises when teaching the prophets, namely, that the books which bear the names of certain authors do not therefore contain only the teachings of the person whose name they bear. Nor are the contents arranged in chronological nor in topical order. The messages of the prophets, in almost all cases, were originally spoken. They were brief oracles, usually impassioned, and in poetic form, which were given at some definite time on some definite occasion. The prophets did not sit down to write after carefully studying their subject and arranging their material as a modern author does. Later, perhaps after some considerable lapse of time, perhaps very shortly after they were spoken, the messages were reduced to writing by a disciple, or, sometimes by the prophet himself, or probably quite often by some one of his hearers. We know that Jeremiah dictated some of his messages, and it is possible that other prophets did the same. But, as a rule, these oracles that had been written out by different people had to be collected by a later editor. When this was done, it was but natural that the messages would not be set down in chronological order, since by that time no one would remember exactly what that order was. And it was also natural that among the oracles spoken by one prophet, those of another prophet could easily be included, especially if some time had elapsed between the giving of the message, and that of the editing. Editors also sometimes added their own historical explanations, and made emendations. Thus when approaching the study of a prophet, with the exception of a few like Jonah (and even there the second chapter

has been added by a different hand) we will not find a book written like a modern book by a single author, with a single aim of his own in view. The so-called 'book' of the prophet in the Old Testament is rather a collection of messages, in which we often find the work of more than one author. For example in the book of Isaiah we have the messages of at least three prophets.

This, of course, makes no difference to the value of what is written nor to the inspiration of the authors. Even though we do not know the name of the author of a book, that makes no difference to the effect of the book on us, and therefore has no effect on the inspiration of the author. But it does mean that when studying the book of a prophet, if we are to understand it properly, and to get the messages in the right perspective, we have to try to sort out the contents as well as we can with the aid of good commentaries. To take the book of Isaiah again, it makes a great difference to our understanding of the subject matter if we know that Isaiah lived and prophesied before the exile, but that a great deal of the latter part of the book, and especially the 'Servant Passages' were written by an unknown prophet who lived after the Exile. Naturally, when teaching adolescent boys and girls, which is the age at which we should teach the prophets, we do not need to go into questions of scholarship in great detail. It is only general outlines that are needed. But some general understanding of the formation and types of the contents of the book should be given.

In teaching any one of the prophets, or in taking a course on the prophets, the following points should, as a rule, be brought out.

1. The prophet's sense of vocation, with particular reference to his call. We have a number of instances where special mention is made of the distinct call the prophet had to the work of God,

and in every case the sense of vocation is very distinct.

2. The loneliness of the prophet. The Hebrew prophet all too often lived in a world apart from his people, and had to face continual opposition and persecution. We remember how Jesus said, 'Woe unto you for ye build the tombs of the prophets and your fathers killed them' (Luke 11 : 47). As we have seen, the prophet was ahead of his times, and, because of that, the people and the authorities were usually out of sympathy with him.
3. The courage shown by the prophets in spite of the opposition and misunderstanding. The prophets were, without exception, courageous men.
4. The prophet was certain of God's will and purpose. He was sure of his message and sure that it came from God.
5. The prophet often had a high standard of patriotism. His patriotism was not the sort of patriotism which says 'My country right or wrong, but right or wrong my country'. Nor was it the patriotism which refused to speak the truth because it might spoil morale or be of use to the enemy. His patriotism was the sort which enabled him to give to his country the best that he had, convinced that truth and sincerity and plain dealing are always to be preferred to diplomacy and politics. The prophet was a patriot who put God first, and did his best to bring his country up to his own high standard. One of the great lessons which the prophets have for us today is just this lesson of what true patriotism is.
6. The prophet had a forward looking attitude. This is not to say that he was engaged in pre-

dicting the future. But his eyes were on the future, rather than on the past, and his message was usually one which would help his people in the future if they would listen to it. As we have seen he was ahead of his times.

7. Each of the prophets had his different contribution to make to the development of the Hebrew religion. Some made much greater contributions than others. But in a study of any prophet and his work we should try to understand the peculiar contribution which he made to knowledge of God and righteousness in the world.
8. We should always try to view each prophet in the perspective of his background and place in the religious history of the Jews.
9. The following were the basic and fundamental ideas of the prophetic teaching generally:—
  1. Removing misunderstanding about the nature of God.
  2. Emphasizing God's relation to history.
  3. Emphasizing the fact that God works in the world and controls it.
  4. Teaching that God is supreme. There can be no other gods before Him.
  5. Teaching that God rules by moral principles and is righteous and holy.
  6. Emphasize on social righteousness, and its necessity for a people if they are to please God.
  7. In most cases there was a repudiation of ritual.
  8. Teaching that Israel was a chosen people, and, in the best of the prophets, the idea of Israel's mission of redemption to the world.

9. The teaching that God punishes sin, and hence the pronouncements of doom on Israel. But again the idea of the ultimate redemption of Israel, even if only of a remnant, and of their mission to the world.

Finally, it is of the greatest importance for us, in any study of the prophets to apply their message to our own day and our own problems.

'The Prophet discovered and proclaimed eternal verities. Yet the garb in which he clothed them was essentially the fashion of his own age. The language, metaphor, styles, and still more the thought-shape were such as were current amongst his compatriots and contemporaries. Further his message was always addressed to a particular occasion and adapted to particular circumstances. This, if one may so speak in all reverence, is God's true method of revelation. The appreciation of Divine truth must be inductive, proceeding from given instances to generalized statements. An abstract disquisition on ethical or theological doctrine would have been meaningless and ineffectual in its own day, and would inevitably have perished with its purpose unfulfilled. Whilst in all cases a practical and pointed application of truth to an immediate condition is the best means of bringing home that truth to men, it was perhaps more necessary among Semitic races than anywhere else. A comparison of the Old Testament with the Koran, that other great monument of Semitic religious literature, shows how small a part the reflective and speculative types of thought had in their production. All is direct, concrete, practical, aimed at meeting the need of the hour, yet seeking to apply, perhaps only half consciously, principles as enduring as personality itself. (But compare Indian thought.)

The task then of the modern interpreter of the prophets is a double one. He is dealing with truth, eternal truth

indeed, yet held in solution of a certain age and of a certain people. He who would apply the message thus presented to the conditions of his own day must first crystallize out the truth itself. He must distinguish between the substance and the solvent. The generalization, the universal, is rarely upon the surface of the prophetic utterance; it must be discovered and clearly stated if its final purpose is to be attained.

This done, a new solvent is to hand in modern conditions, modern speech and the modern outlook. The meaning of God for human life needs to be stated in these terms also if its permanent efficiency is to be secured. There are times indeed when this double process is startlingly easy. Not once but often in human history have similar conditions appeared. With comparatively slight alterations of outward form it is possible to see reproduced in the modern world the position of ancient Samaria, Jerusalem, or Babylon. In reading such books as Amos or Hosea, we are repeatedly struck by their extraordinary suitability for present conditions. God is still God, man is still man, (sin is still sin) and the essential message of every true prophet is as valid for our own day as it was for his.<sup>1</sup>

The following is a suggested course on some of the prophets. As will be seen, it is not exhaustive, and each prophet could be done in greater detail, and more individuals could be taken into account. But the general approach is one which will be found valuable when dealing with the prophets. It should be emphasized that a great deal of attention should be paid to the application of the prophetic messages to our modern situation. This type of course is suitable for older pupils of 16 or 17 years of age.

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<sup>1</sup> *Prophecy and the Prophets, T. H. Robinson, Duckworth, pp. 48-49.*

## A COURSE ON THE PROPHETS

Amos; Hosea; 1 Isaiah; Micah; Jeremiah; 2 Isaiah.

### 1. *Amos.*

#### (a) Historical background.

Amos lived in the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. Jeroboam was a successful king from the political point of view, and because of the pre-occupation of Syria with the rising power of Assyria, he was able to get back for Israel the territory that had been lost in previous reigns, and to restore the boundaries of the country as they were supposed to have been in the time of Solomon. The result was that the reign of Jeroboam II was a time of worldly prosperity for Israel. Luxury had come, and with it grave social evils. The rich ground down the poor, and believed that their prosperity was the gift of God. Formal religion flourished, but was divorced from social righteousness.

Let pupils write out an account of the idea they get of the state of the country from the following passages:—

Readings: Chapter 6 : 1-6; 3 : 10, 15; 2 : 6-8;  
4 : 6-11; 5 : 7; 8 : 4-6; 4 : 4-11 (formal religion.)

#### (b) Biographical material.

See Chapter 1 : 1; 7 : 10-15; 3 : 7-8.

Amos was a shepherd living at a place called Tekoa. This was in the kingdom of Judah but was not far from Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. It was closer to Samaria than Agra is to Delhi. So that Amos would know a great deal about what was going on in the prosperous and licentious city of Samaria. Like all the great prophets, he had a compelling sense of the call of God to deliver the message of God to His people. Although Amos belonged to Judah, his message was to the northern kingdom.

Let pupils write down in their note-books what they can find about Amos and his life from a reading of the book, before the biographical references are given them.

Let them list the outstanding traits of Amos' character which a reading of the book suggests to them.

(c) The messages of Amos.

(1) The sins against which Amos spoke:

1. The sins of neighbouring countries. Read Chapter 1 : 3 to Chapter 2 : 5.
2. The sins of Israel. Get pupils to read the following passages and then make a list of the sins found in Israel. Chapter 2 : 6 to Chapter 6 : 14.

(Oppression, cruelty, dishonesty, exploitation of the poor and helpless, immorality, ingratitude, injustice, debased and formalistic religion.)

Get pupils to discuss whether any of these sins are to be found in India today.

Notice the way in which the prophet pronounces how God will punish the people of Israel for these sins. Read Chapter 7 : 1-9 ; Chapter 8 : 1-3 for Amos's vision of punishment. Also Chapter 9 : 1-10.

Discuss whether God still punishes nations for such sins today or not?

(2) The central messages of Amos.

1. Jehovah controls the whole world. He is concerned with all nations and not simply with Israel. He will punish other nations for their wickedness (see Chapter 1); God holds sway everywhere in heaven and earth (4 : 6-11 ; 9 : 1-4). Though he does not say so in so many words, God, in the eyes of Amos, is the only real God, and is supreme over all.
2. God is righteous and deals with peoples and nations on a moral basis. The reason He punishes other nations is that they had acted

against moral principles. This was why Israel was to be punished. Her sins were sins against righteousness. The people of Israel were socially unrighteous (read again the passage on the sins of Israel) and this was why they were to be punished.

3. Religion was not just a matter of ritual, sacrifices, rites and ceremonies. God requires honest living and righteousness, and this cannot be separated from religion (Chapter 5 : 21-24; 14-15). If anyone protested that his attitude to ritual and ceremonies meant the destruction of religion, Amos answered that Israel got on all right without them in the wilderness (5 : 25) and that, in fact, God would destroy the shrines of a religion which was not true religion, because it was divorced from morality (3 : 14; 7 : 9; 9 : 1).

Amos thus taught that morality, social righteousness, and true religion were inseparable. This is the great lesson of his assault on the rich and privileged of his day.

Have discussion with pupils on the bearings of this message of Amos on personal life, on the economic system in vogue in India, on the effect that acting according to it would have on our attitude to Communism, on the message Amos has for the Indian Church as a whole, and for the particular congregation with which pupils are connected.

Discuss:

1. 'The doom which Amos pronounced against the capitalists of his day he would pronounce against the modern capitalist, if he were alive today.'
2. What would the attitude of Amos be towards the caste system?

## 2. *Hosea*.

### (a) Historical background.

This is similar to that of Amos but slightly later. He belonged to the northern kingdom and began to prophesy when Jereboam II was still on the throne. But after his death the Assyrians began to become aggressive.

*Note*.—The text of Hosea is, in many places, uncertain, and the book is, in many places, difficult to follow. Some parts are very difficult to understand. But the general thought and teaching are clear, even though we cannot now understand some of the allusions, and though the book has been so edited that prophecies that seem to have nothing to do with each other sometimes stand side by side. The book suffers from lack of arrangement. But even so we can understand the lessons which the prophet sought to teach. The book is divided into two sections—Chapters 1-3; Chapters 4-14.

### (b) Biographical material.

The prophet's unhappy marriage, Chapter 1 : 2-9; and Chapter 3.

The story of this is difficult to follow, but appears to have been as follows :

He married a girl named Gomer and they had three children. These three children were given names to express the prophet's ideas of what God thought of His chosen people. The family was not a happy one and gradually Hosea's wife drifted into a life of sin and finally ran away from her husband, and lived with other men. Hosea never ceased loving her, and when he heard, after some time, that she was in distress and in need of help, he went to her, and brought the sinner who had fallen on evil days, back to his home.

Compare this story with the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). What does this story tell us about the character of Hosea ?

Read Chapter 11 : 1-4. This seems to show that he was fond of children ; Chapter 9 : 8 hints that he was persecuted.

(c) The message of Hosea.

Chapter 1 : 4-9. Here we see the feeling that Hosea had of the doom which would overtake Israel. He was as sure as Amos was that the sins of his people would be punished. We get a touch of the attitude of Amos in 4 : 2, 3. We get a picture of the state of the country after the death of Jereboam II in Chapter 4. (After the death of Jereboam II, in a year, there were three kings, two of whom secured their positions by murder.) We get a picture of the state of the court in 7 : 5-7. Justice and morals had gone from bad to worse.

Amos said that the reason for this disaster was the neglect of righteousness. Hosea gave as the reason the failure of Israel to understand her real relationship to God. We find the same teaching against ritual and formalism as in Amos 8 : 13, 14.

Jehovah has all along loved Israel (11 : 1 ; 12 : 9 ; 13 : 4). The love of God for Israel was the greatest fact in her history. (11 : 1-4 ; 13 : 9, 10 ; 2 : 8.)

But Israel was unfaithful and spurned the love of God. (6 : 4-11 ; 7 : 11-16 ; 8 : 11-14 ; 6 : 4-10).

God would therefore punish her (13 : 14-16 ; Chapter 9).

But this was not the end. Hosea learned from his own experience with his sinning wife, that it was possible to love the sinner, and to restore him. His great message therefore was that God would bring back Israel to His house, and would take her back again to Himself. Amos had no hope of anything but doom and punishment. Hosea saw an ultimate redemption through the love of God (Chapter 14 ; 11 : 8-11 ; 6 : 1-3 ; 2 : 14-23).

*Note.*—The influence of Hosea on the spiritual leaders of his people who followed him, was great. We see his influence over Jeremiah. Jesus quoted Hosea 6 : 6 (Matt. 9 : 13 ; 12 : 7).

Religion for Hosea was a personal relationship of love, for which externals of ritual and ceremonies could be no substitute. God is One who forgives and takes back the erring sinner just as Hosea took back his wife.

Get pupils to compare the teaching of Amos and Hosea, noting resemblances and differences.

Discuss the following:

‘Amos is the apostle of justice, Hosea the prophet of love.’

Get pupils to discuss the bearing of the teaching of Hosea on the following questions:—

1. The treatment of defeated enemies, who have done us great injury and wrong.
2. Our attitude to those in our own country who may persecute us.
3. Our attitude individually to those who do us wrong.
4. How far our individual lives and the life of the Church measure up to the saying of Hosea which Jesus quoted twice, ‘For I desired mercy and not sacrifice’.

3. *First Isaiah.* (Isaiah, Chapters 1–39).

*Note.*—The book of Isaiah, as we have it in the Bible, consists of the work of at least two, probably three, and possibly four, different prophets. The work of the first prophet, whose name was Isaiah, we have in Chapters 1–39 of the book of Isaiah. He lived before the Exile. The second prophet (or prophets) lived after the Exile.

(a) Historical background.

The first Isaiah was connected with the nobility of Jerusalem. He lived and worked during the reigns of four kings of Judah (he was a prophet of Judah), Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. During his time Judah was threatened with destruction by Assyria.

(b) Biographical material.

Isaiah belonged to the aristocracy, probably to a priestly family, and possibly was connected with the king's family. He was married and had at least three sons. (Isa. 7 : 3 ; 8 : 3 ; 8 : 18).

Note especially the call of Isaiah as described in Chapter 6. What elements can you see in this call, and what lessons can we learn for ourselves from it. (In this connection a study of the problem of choosing a vocation may be taken up).

Isaiah took an important part in politics. What he did in the reign of Ahaz is described in Chapter 7 : 1-9. He brought religion into politics. He taught that complete obedience to God was political wisdom (7 : 9). But Ahaz preferred an alliance with Assyria. He would not ask God for a sign; that is, he would not trust the guidance of God. (Is. 7 : 10-16).

Isaiah therefore foretold the destruction of Judah (7 : 17-25).

Under Ahaz, Judah became a dependency of Assyria (2 Kings 16 : 8).

But with the accession of Hezekiah came a desire for freedom from Assyria, and Hezekiah contemplated an alliance with Philistia against Assyria. But Isaiah again came into the picture (14 : 32).

He again taught that confidence should be in God and not in alliances with other nations. So he denounces Egypt and Ethiopia the main elements in the anti-Assyria plans. (20 : 1-6; 18 : 1-6; 19 : 1-5; 30 : 1-8; 31 : 1-4.)

Isaiah's political creed was that Israel, that is Judah, should depend on God and not on other countries. But Judah did not listen to him, and war with Sennacherib came. His advance is described in Chapter 10 : 28-32.

But Isaiah believed that Assyria was but the tool of God and that she would in turn be punished. (10 : 5-12.) Isaiah has faith that the final result would be the vindication of God and His people, even if only of a remnant of the latter. (29 : 1-8; 30 : 27-33; 31 : 5-9; 37 : 21-35.) This was justified by the final defeat of Sennacherib which is described in 2 Kings 19.

(c) The message of Isaiah.

(1) Against oppression and injustice. (5 : 1-25; 1 : 16-20; 33 : 13-16.)

(2) On the holiness of God. (Chapter 6; 5 : 13-25.)

(3) That faith in God is the secret of true political and national life. (See the biographical material and also 2 : 1-5, Chapter 12; 14 : 29-32; 8 : 11-18; Chapter 25; 26 : 1-4).

(4) The doctrine of the remnant. Even though the nation were destroyed, there would be a remnant left who would be faithful to God, and this remnant would hand down the true religion of Jehovah. (1 : 9; 10 : 20-23; 7 : 3 (the meaning of Shear-jashub is, a remnant shall return) 6 : 13).

(5) Against ritualism and externalism in religion. (1 : 10-15.)

(6) The supremacy of God over all nations and men, and His final triumph. (26 : 5-16; 34 : 1-5; Chapter 35.)

Get pupils to discuss how Isaiah's idea of a remnant keeping alight the torch of God's truth, applies to the Christian Church in India today, and what is involved in being such a 'remnant'. Have discussion on Isaiah's ideas of faith and confidence in God being the basis of true political and national life. Will faith in God and obedience

to His will bring national triumph and prosperity, and ensure defeat of enemies?

Compare Isaiah's teaching with that of Amos and Hosea.

What message has Isaiah's emphasis on the holiness of God have for us personally? How would it affect many current economic practices?

#### 4. *Micah.*

##### (a) Historical background.

Micah lived at the same time as Isaiah (1 : 1) but probably outlived him. His first prophecies, found in Chapters 1-3 were probably made in the years 730-721 B.C. when the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by Assyria (see Jeremiah 26 : 18-19).

##### (b) Biographical material.

Micah was a countryman, and quite a different type of man from Isaiah. He had no court or aristocratic affiliations, and apparently no particular affection for Jerusalem. He resembled Amos more than he did Isaiah. He lived in Moresheth Gath, a village near the border of Philistia (1 : 1).

Like all prophets, he had a strong sense of the call of God, and of being sent by God (3 : 8). He shows here his purpose in life and the source of his strength.

##### (c) The message of Micah.

##### (1) Micah, the prophet of the poor:

'He brings his vigorous convictions to bear on the agrarian injustice of his own neighbourhood (2 : 1-2) and upon the evils of the capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem (1 : 5) . . . He is keenly sensitive to the wrongs of the peasant-proprietor's eviction (Chapter 2) and of the breaking up of his home (2 : 9). Not less keen is his antagonism to the men of place and power guilty of abusing their trust, whether they are oppressive rulers (3 : 1-3) self-interested prophets (3 : 5) or hireling priests (3 : 11) . . . . If Jehovah hates all this

social injustice, Jehovah will destroy the city wherein it centres and the city's temple (3 : 12).'

Read the first 3 chapters of Micah carefully, and list the sins that he preaches against. Should we be preaching against such sins today?

In 3 : 10-12, we see that Micah does not believe that just because there is a holy city (Jerusalem) and the temple there, God is necessarily present among his people. Notice how here he carries on the teaching of Amos. (See also 6 : 10-15.)

Does the real success of the Christian Church in India depend on its organization, its ritual, its tradition, or on the stand that it makes for social justice and for obedience to the will of God? Can we trust in our membership of the Church and forget our day by day conduct in the ordinary affairs of life?

(2) The essence of true religion. (6 : 1-9). Here we can see again the fundamental principles of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.

(3) The final triumph of God and the coming of all peoples to acknowledge Him. (Chapter 4; 7 : 8-20.)

(4) The forgiveness of God. (7 : 16-20.)

(5) The doctrine of the remnant as in Isaiah. (5 : 7-8; 7 : 18.)

(6) His prediction that the Messiah who shall deliver Israel will not come from the cities, or from among the strong or from those of high position or of influence, but from a small country village. Micah was a democrat. (5 : 1-7.)

Get pupils to compare Micah and Amos.

Discuss his denouncement of land transactions with reference to the land position in India today.

Does unjust dealing bring its punishment as Micah believed? If Chapter 6 : 8 were applied by all Church members in their lives what difference would it make?

## 5. *Jeremiah.*

### (a) Historical background.

Jeremiah began his work in the reign of Josiah, and continued through the reigns of Jehoiakim, the first capture of Jerusalem, the reign of Zedekiah, and the final capture of Jerusalem, and the carrying off of those who had been left, into exile. He was then with Gedaliah until the latter was murdered, and then was taken down into Egypt where he died. The call of Jeremiah was in 626 B.C. and he took part in the reformation under Josiah after the finding of the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy) in 621 B.C. The first deportation to Babylon took place in 597 and the final one in 586 B.C. During the life of Jeremiah, Judah was threatened by an attack from the Scythians from the north. The Assyrian Empire came to an end in 612 B.C. and then came the rise of the Babylonian power. Babylon defeated Egypt in 605 B.C. at the battle of Carchemish. Then a few years later came the final catastrophe of the capture of Jerusalem by Babylon.

### (b) Biographical material.

Jeremiah was born about 645 in the village of Anathoth, some three or four miles north-east of Jerusalem. He came of a priestly family, and was probably descended from that Abiathar who was banished from the court of Solomon for his share in Adonijah's rebellion (1 Kings 2 : 19-27).

The call of Jeremiah 1 : 5-10. Compare the attitude of Isaiah with that of Jeremiah.

The visions which gave Jeremiah his message. (1 : 11-12; 1 : 13-19.)

Jeremiah foretold the Scythian invasion which did not eventuate. (1 : 14-16.)

In Chapter 2 we have the sum of Jeremiah's message to his people at the beginning of his ministry.

Later he helped in the reformation under Josiah. This resulted in the rousing of the enmity of his fellow townsmen against him, because the reformation of Josiah meant the centralization of worship in Jerusalem (9 : 1-8). Jeremiah was turned out of his native place (9 : 18-23).

'Steadily Jeremiah drifted away from the reformers. He felt himself increasingly a man apart. Not only were family joys denied him (14 : 2), but his faithfulness to his vocation cut him off from the society of his fellows. He could neither share their religious views, nor their future expectations. He was essentially a solitary being. His only intimate companion was God, and thus he was led to make increasingly more of what we call the 'inner life'. In a series of remarkable passages (11 : 18-23; 12 : 1-6; 15 : 10-21; 17 : 14-18; 18 : 18-25; 20 : 7-28) he admits us into the deepest shrine of his nature and he records for us his communion with God.' <sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah was persecuted for his message of doom for Jerusalem and the temple unless the people repented, but was saved from death by the people and the princes who referred to a similar prophecy of Micah (Chapter 26).

After a time Baruch wrote down Jeremiah's messages. They were read to the king who destroyed them (Chapter 36).

Jerusalem was finally captured and the best of the people taken away to Babylon. In Chapter 29 : 4-13 we have a letter to these exiles from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah tried to get those who remained under Zedekiah to be loyal to Babylon. He denounced those who plotted revolt (Chapters 27, 28).

When the revolt came and Babylon attacked, Jeremiah advised surrender to save suffering, and told all who could do so to leave the city. For this he was imprisoned (Chapters 37, 38).

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Prophets of the Bible', *H. Cook*, S.C.M., p. 95.

After the capture of the city Jeremiah stayed with Gedaliah, and after his murder was forced to go to Egypt (Chapter 43).

(c) The Message of Jeremiah.

(1) God and Sin:

Jeremiah taught that God punishes sin, whether it be the sin of the individual or of a nation. (4 : 14-18; 5 : 7-9; 5 : 25-29; 9 : 1-11.)

(2) God is also merciful and will forgive if people repent. (7 : 1-7; 8 : 4-12.)

(3) Jeremiah emphasized that religion is a thing of the heart, and not of sacrifices or of the temple. He was against the institutional religion of his time. (7 : 21-28; 7 : 2-16; 14 : 10-12.)

(4) The sins that Jeremiah condemned:

1. Leaving the worship of the One True God and worshipping gods of other countries. (7 : 17-20.)

2. Oppression and injustice. (7 : 5-8; 9 : 5-9; 22 : 3-5; 22 : 13-19.)

(5) A message of hope and of forgiveness. (12 : 12-17; 14 : 7-9; also Chapters 30 and 31.)

(6) The message of the New Covenant. In this Jeremiah emphasizes the personal relationship between the individual and God. The individual is responsible to God. (31 : 22-34.)

Jeremiah has been called: 'The prince of prophets'. Can you suggest any reason for this praise?

Discuss the question of how national evils have a personal cause. Is there any real difference between the so-called personal gospel and the so-called social gospel?

Discuss the difference between the priestly and prophetic view-points as illustrated in the life and teaching of Jeremiah. Do we have such a difference of view-point in the Indian Church today?

## 6. *The Second Isaiah.*

*Note.*—In the second part of the book of Isaiah are included the writings of another prophet besides those of the man referred to as the second Isaiah, and possibly of a third prophet also.

### (a) Historical background.

In 547 Cyrus, king of Media attacked Asia Minor and conquered most of it by 546. He then began to prepare to attack Babylon. The Jewish exiles who had been living in Babylonish territory for some time were divided when the prospect of the defeat of Babylon became real. Some wanted to stay where they were. They had lost their enthusiasm for their national home and their religion.

But there were others who looked for deliverance, a return to Jerusalem, and the practice of their religion in its ancient centre. In the rise and success of Cyrus they saw the hand of God working. It was in this situation that, about 150 years after the first Isaiah, the second Isaiah gave his message. In Chapters 40–48 we have references to the rise of Cyrus and to Babylonian idolatry. By the time Chapters 49–55 were written the political position was clear and the Jews had real hope of a speedy restoration to their country.

### (b) Biographical material.

There is no material in the book which tells us anything about the life of this unknown prophet. But we can see from his writings that he was a man of peculiar religious sensitiveness, and a man who had greater spiritual insight than any other writer in the Old Testament.

Get pupils, after reading the writings of the Second Isaiah, to write character sketches of the first and second Isaiahs, as suggested by their writings, contrasting and comparing them.

(c) The Message of the Second Isaiah.

(1) A message of hope to his people. They have suffered, but their sins have been punished, and soon they will be going back to their own country. (42 : 24-43 : 7; 51 : 17-23; 54 : 6-10.)

(2) A message that God is above all, and that there is no limit to His power. (40 : 12-17; 40 : 22-31.) Idols are helpless and useless, and cannot be compared with God. (Chapter 46; 41 : 21-29.)

(3) Teaching about God's relationship with His people. God is Israel's husband (54 : 5); shepherd (40 : 11). His love is greater than a mother's (49 : 14-15). They are His chosen people (51 : 2, 3; 45 : 23-25). God grants forgiveness (44 : 21-23).

(4) God works in history. Cyrus does His work (48 : 12-15; 46 : 10-11). (The ravenous bird, here, is Cyrus, 45 : 1-4.)

(5) The Servant passages, where the prophet passes beyond nationalism to the world mission of redemption of all. Israel was to be God's missionary. She was intended to redeem the world, and God had been preparing her for this work through her suffering in exile. This was the message which Jesus later took up and carried out:

A. Isaiah 42 : 1-7. Whose servant is it and what is the service? What are the methods of service? (verses 2 and 3). Compare this with the second temptation of Jesus. What was the power behind the servant?

B. Isaiah 49 : 1-6; 50 : 4-9. The servant as prophet. There is a definite call (verse 1). He had a challenging message and a sure faith in God (verse 4). He had a capacity to listen and a readiness to suffer.

C. Isaiah 52 : 13-53 : 12. The servant as martyr. The servant is willing to bear all that evil men can do, and still love and serve them in return.

This is his method of conquering evil, and of witnessing for God and declaring his love. Compare this with the work of Jesus on the Cross.

Discuss the following:—

A prophet almost always suffers. Is this true and if so what is the reason.

The pacifist follows in the steps of the suffering servant, and so uses the method of destroying evil which God uses.

How can we listen for the voice of God?

Are we ever guilty of 'quenching the smoking flax' by the treatment we mete out to those who have sinned, either as individuals or as a Church?

What light does the message of the suffering servant throw on what our relationships with non-Christians ought to be?

## SOME DIFFICULTIES

## MIRACLES

In considering the subject of miracles the first thing that we have to understand clearly is what a miracle is.

There is a word used in this connection which always seems to me to be very misleading. This is the word super-natural. We often say that a miracle is something supernatural. Now really there is no such thing as the supernatural. There is what we may call the super-understandable if we like, but that is an entirely different matter.

As we have seen before, God works according to methods. We have to try to understand these methods. Too often we assume that He works according to what we think ought to be His methods, and we do not approach His works with the open and enquiring minds which we ought to have. We cannot hope to understand God's world, to understand history, to understand religion unless we seek, with open minds, to find what the facts tell us. It is fatal to approach the subject with prejudiced minds; and by prejudiced I mean the literal meaning of the word, that is, judging beforehand. We must try not to superimpose our ideas on what God actually does.

Now, as we study nature, we find that there are certain laws according to which the various processes in our environment carry on. These we call the laws of science or the laws of nature. Science is very largely, as has been said, thinking the thoughts of God after him. The more we study science, the more we find that there are definite

ways in which things happen, and that certain causes will, if conditions are the same, give the same results. We know the sun rises everyday, and we know why it does. We know that if water is reduced to a certain temperature it will freeze. We know that if a stone is thrown up into the air it will come to earth again. If we found that a stone, when thrown up into the air, stayed there, we should be disposed to say that it was a miracle. But we see an aeroplane stay in the sky, and we do not think of it, now, as a miracle. We understand something of the laws which the aeroplane is obeying, and so we do not think of it as a miracle. But we know too, that savages who have never seen anything stay in the air in that way, when they see an aeroplane for the first time, regard it as what we call a miracle. Why do they think it a miracle when we do not? It is simply because we think we understand why the aeroplane stays there, and the savage does not understand it. We are able to think God's thoughts after Him while the savage cannot. We have found out certain of the ways in which God works while the savage has not found out those ways.

Now when we have found out the ways in which God works, we call them natural. The laws of science which we have found out we call natural. We say it is natural for water to flow down a hill, for rain to fall, and so on. All we really mean is that we understand why it does so. We have been able to follow what God commonly does. I am assuming, of course, that all of us accept the Christian standpoint that God is behind everything that happens, and that all that happens in the universe is the expression of God's will, in the long run. As I have said, the world of nature is the expression of God's mind and thoughts. The more then we find out about nature, the more we find out about God.

Now this same principle holds good when we leave what we may call the natural sciences, and come to the

realm of the mind and the soul. We are, in these days, developing the science of psychology. This again is simply thinking the thoughts of God after Him in the region of the mind and personality of man. As we learn psychology, we are finding out how God has worked and does work now in man. As yet this science is in its infancy, which means that we have not yet got very far in following God in this realm, and we do not yet understand a great deal of how He works in this realm. Hence we are much more disposed to see miracles here than we are in natural sciences. We do not understand so well what is going on. We do not understand so well how God works. But when we do understand, we again begin to employ the word natural.

There is a further realm where we know still less, and that is the matter of the interaction of spirit and matter, and the effect of what we call spirit on what we call matter. Because we know so little here, we are still more ready to admit the occurrence of what we call miracle. A man is cured of a disease by suggestion, by what we call faith-healing, and we hail it as a miracle. But we are beginning to find out something about faith-healing, and of the ways in which the spirit can affect the body, and we are not so disposed to think such happenings wonderful as we were twenty years ago. Probably, in a hundred years time, people will call them natural, and think as little of it as we do of water turning into ice. By that time they will understand far better the laws of God in this particular matter.

In the commonly accepted sense, a miracle is an irregularity in the order of nature that demands the explanation that it is a special act of the divine will. This pre-supposes that the order of nature is not the order of the divine mind, and that the laws of nature are not the working of the divine will; or that the divine will works through mutually estranged orders; one, that of nature, and the other, one to be recognized by its overriding of the natural order.

And it also presupposes that we know the limits of the natural. It thus confuses our thought of God, and exaggerates our knowledge of God.

This common notion of miracle is a survival of the Jewish demand for a sign, which Jesus condemned, and it made good its hold on Christendom as the base of the theology of the Middle Ages, in which the Church's divine deposit of revealed truth was held to have been attested and accredited by miracle. The system of thought which demands an external authority can get it only by putting God outside His world, and then proving His activity by the scars and breakages of his re-entrance. It reverses the parable and makes the Shepherd accredit himself by climbing in some other way than the normal.

But today the whole notion has become unacceptable, and even inconceivable. It either denies nature to God or imputes inconsistencies to Him, and is therefore repugnant to religion as to science, while it creates unnecessary conflict between them. For what the scientist stipulates for in his conception of the natural order is nothing but regularity of sequence; that given the same causes and conditions the same results will follow. And a perfectly wise mind and will would always, in exactly the same circumstances, do the same thing. So that the order of nature runs in precisely the same way as the consistency of God, and if He has anything to do with nature at all, an act of His that was a breach of her order would be a breach of His own consistency.

It is sometimes said that if there were no miracles in the accepted sense, God would be a prisoner in His own universe. He would be so only in the sense that the thought of the thinker is imprisoned by the laws of reason. To ask for miracles, is to ask for God to contradict Himself. The one real miracle in the universe, the one breach in its order, the one experienced inconsequence, is sin. Sin is lawlessness, and the fact that it breaks the order of the

universe stamps it as evincing, not the activity of God, but the opposite.

We can see now why the distinction made between 'natural' and 'supernatural', in the sense in which the words are usually used, is an entirely misleading one. We usually understand by this distinction that certain things which are 'natural' always happen, and we do not think of God as being particularly concerned with them. Then when we think that God has made some special break into our universe and lives, we say that this is supernatural, and imply that there is a power at work which is greater than the power which is at work in nature. Nature, we think, is, as it were, stuck, and must work in certain definite ways. God can break into this, and act contrary to nature. What we really mean is that one set of happenings we think we understand, whereas the other set of happenings we do not understand.

Now all the works and ways of God are natural. There is no such thing as the supernatural. God does not break the laws He has made. But when we think He does, it simply means that there are vast stretches of God's work, and vast numbers of His ways that we do not understand. We understand the reason for the aeroplane not obeying the law of gravitation, and do not think of it as breaking that law. If we understood all, we should understand, that no law of God is being broken, just as we do in the case of the aeroplane.

It is not a question of God being able to break the laws of nature. It is simply that He does not do so. He has chosen certain ways of working in the universe, in the lives of men, and of carrying out His purpose, and those ways are the best possible. If we admitted that God broke His own laws we should have to admit lack of foresight and knowledge on the part of God. So while it may be quite possible, theoretically, for Almighty God to break His

own laws, religiously and ethically it is not possible, and it is a matter of fact that He does not do so.

We must further remember that all I have been saying applies not only to what we call nature and the laws of nature, but applies also to the laws of mind, to the laws of the development of the personality, to the laws of right living, and to the laws of religion. When God comes into the heart of a man, and that man accepts a new ideal of life and begins to live a life in accordance with the will of God, whereas before he has been living an evil life, we have a perfectly natural thing. In bringing about that change God has worked according to ways that we can partly understand, and some day will understand in full. We may say, if we like, that the conversion of Paul was a miracle. If by that we mean it was something which we so far do not fully understand, then we are on safe ground. Some day we shall not be inclined to call it a miracle but shall look on such a happening as quite natural, using those two words in our common meaning.

This is the background of thought then that we should have when approaching the miracles of the Bible. I would lay down three principles that we should keep in mind when considering these miracles.

1. Nothing is impossible for God, and we cannot say on *a priori* grounds that any particular miracle is impossible. That is, we cannot say that because of our knowledge of the ways of God, of science if you like, that such and such a miracle is impossible, as for example that it is impossible for the dead to be brought to life. We must approach each miracle with the realization that our knowledge of how God works is limited, and that we cannot say anything is impossible. We can say, if we like, that we cannot understand.

2. We can lay it down that God does not break His own laws. If it appears from the account of any miracle that this has happened, then either some law is being used by

God of which we know nothing, or there is some mistake in the account.

3. The fact that the account of a miracle is in the Bible does not mean that the happening took place exactly as recorded, or that we must accept the account as correct. Keeping in mind what I have said above, that we must approach the account of a miracle realizing that nothing is impossible, and that we are very limited in knowledge, it still remains true that we must take each account of a so-called miraculous happening on its own merits. The fact that it is written in the Bible, is no guarantee that the account is correct. When we study a miracle we have to take into account the historical evidence for the accuracy of the account, the person who wrote the account, the circumstances under which it was written, and the personality of the person concerned.

4. We should never allow miracles to be a ground of faith. There are too many chances of our faith being upset if it rests on such a flimsy basis. Especially in modern times, when we have come to realize so much better that God does work according to regular ways and laws, and when the historical evidence for so many so-called miracles in the Bible is being questioned and found defective, it is not a safe foundation. Jesus Himself realized this, and refused to use miracles as a means for making people believe on Him. He would not use His wonderful works to over-awe people into the Kingdom of God. His claim to be the Son of God does not rest on His miracles, and the truth or otherwise of the account of any particular miracle makes no difference to our faith in Jesus, if it is firmly founded on the right foundation. The same is true of the recorded miracles in the Old Testament. Jesus Himself thought this desire for marvels, non-religious, and, in fact, wrong. 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe' said Jesus, and evidently put such belief on a very low plane. 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh

after a sign' he said again, and refused to give them a sign.

When considering any particular miracle there are a number of things which we have to keep in mind. The first is that the records of these miracles have come down to us from times which were quite different from the times in which we live, and from people who had an entirely different outlook on life, and attitude to life, from our own. They were pre-scientific times, when people were far more credulous than they are today. They were prepared to accept things which we, today, would at once question. They did not demand the evidence for statements which we demand today. They had not the scientific attitude which is so widespread today. They knew little about the laws of science, and did not have the difficulty which we have today, in accepting things which seemed to run counter to all experience.

As a result, when we have the account of a miracle we have no attempt made to give any proof of what happened, nor do we, as a rule, have the attempt of a careful observer to give us all the details that would enable us to understand exactly what happened. The writers who described miraculous happenings were not concerned with detailed descriptions, and therefore it is often hard for us to reproduce again, exactly what happened. For example, those who recorded the healing miracles of Jesus were not particularly concerned with diagnosis, nor with giving us details of the symptoms. Naturally enough, they simply accepted the diagnosis of the times, and it is difficult for us to tell now, how correct their conclusions were. For example, in the case of the healings of leprosy we cannot tell whether it means what we mean today by leprosy or not. Most probably it does not mean modern leprosy. The description of the disease known as (Lepra) translated 'leprosy' is quite different from modern leprosy. Provision was made for a cure of this disease which does not suggest

in any way that it was like our modern leprosy. It is probable that this word, translated leprosy, was used to describe not merely one disease but a number of skin diseases. This applies to both New and Old Testament accounts. This is but one example of how we do not have the information which we need to come to a conclusion about numbers of accounts of miracles. In the case of the raising of Jairus' daughter we have a hint from Jesus' own words that she was not really dead, but again we cannot say definitely whether Jesus meant what He said literally or not.

Secondly we have to take into account the personality of the one who performs the miracle. This is where there is one vital difference between the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, and those recorded in the Gospels. I suppose most of us have much less difficulty with the latter than with the former. Given the character and life and personality of Jesus Christ, a life lived on a level so much above anything the world has ever seen, it was quite natural for things to happen which were unusual, and for an expression of the laws of God to be given us, which could not be given except by one whose life was on such a level.

We know how much Jesus emphasized faith in all that He did. This faith was required in the one on whom the miracle was worked, and in the one who was working the miracle. He, as we know, could not do His wonderful works where there was lack of faith in those whom He was trying to help. At the same time, He told his disciples that it was absolutely necessary for them to have faith if they wished to be able to work miracles. Now we have in Jesus a faith in God that was extraordinary, and such as the world had never seen. It was therefore natural for the world to see, as a result of that faith, wonders which had never been seen before. Thus, when considering the

miracles recorded in the Gospels, this is a vital consideration which will help us a great deal in coming to a conclusion.

At the same time, we have also to take into account that Jesus could not have done things which were contrary to the laws of God, whether physical or spiritual. As we have seen, God is not inconsistent. If we find things that are inconsistent with the nature of God as He has revealed Himself to us, especially through Jesus, we have to look on such a thing with grave suspicion. For instance, we have the miracle recorded in Mark and Matthew (Mark 11 : 13) of the withering of the fig tree. Jesus came to the tree hoping to get some fruit from it but found that there was no fruit on it. So, in his disappointment, He cursed the tree, and said that no one would ever eat fruit of that tree in the future. Then the next day as they passed the tree they found it was withered up. Now such a story is impossible to reconcile with the rest of Jesus' life and character. It is not the type of action which we can associate with Him, because of our knowledge of the usual way in which He lived and acted. Therefore we doubt the authenticity of such an incident. In all probability Jesus teaching about the fig tree in the parable in Luke 13 : 6-9 has been transformed into a miracle.

In the same way, in the case of the turning of the water into wine at Cana, we have a miracle which it is legitimate to doubt, because of its lack of agreement with the rest of the life and teaching of Jesus. Apart from other difficulties such as being set down as a sign of the sort that Jesus consistently refused to give, it seems hardly likely that Jesus would supply a hundred and twenty gallons of wine to people who had already had a fair amount. Of course in such estimates I admit that there is a subjective element involved. What I think inconsistent with the character of Jesus may not appear so to some one else. We have to make our own judgments. But the principle involved is not subjective. In estimating the probability of miracles

this element, which we have been discussing, must be taken into account.

We have examples of the same thing in the Old Testament. Is it consistent with what we know of God the Father of Jesus Christ to suppose that He would send out bears to tear to pieces children who, though certainly ill-mannered, would never be given such a punishment by any one of us? We may think that it *is* consistent, and if so, then we can accept the happening as authentic. But if, as I suppose is the case with most of us, we cannot conceive of God as acting in this way, then we will naturally doubt the authenticity of the account. That is, we test a doubtful case by the body of the knowledge of God that has been given to us. God must be consistent.

In the same way we shall probably be doubtful about, or at least suspend judgment on, the occurrence reported in Joshua 10 : 12 where the sun was supposed to have stood still in the midst of heaven. God has in this day given us a fuller knowledge of His workings. We know that it is the earth that moves round the sun, and not the sun that moves round the earth, as the people of that day thought. We know far more of the universe of which our solar system is only one very small part, and most of us believe that such a happening as recorded, is not the way in which God works, still less that He would have done such a thing in order to enable Joshua and the Hebrews to kill more people. It is inconsistent with both the physical and spiritual laws of God.

There are many other miracles in the Old Testament where we have to take all these things into account in reckoning whether they are really authentic. There is first of all the particular record, and the reliability of the text. Then there is the question of the personality of the person concerned. Is he or she a person of such great spirituality that we would expect such happenings to occur in connection with them? Then we have to consider

whether the happening in question is consistent with what we know of the nature and character of God. Therefore, as I say, we have to approach each miracle with an open mind. We must neither think that it is impossible, nor that because it is in the Bible, therefore it must have happened. We must in each case examine all the available evidence. If we are not convinced either one way or the other, then there is nothing wrong in not coming to a conclusion. Our faith and love for God will not suffer simply because we have to say in connection with some miracles that we do not know. They might have happened, but they might not. We must always remember that Jesus did not consider miracles or belief in miracles essential for faith in Him or in God.

There is another point which I should mention in connection with arriving at a judgment concerning the authenticity of miracles, and it is this. The number of miracles connected with a great man of ancient times, and the extent of the miraculous element in them, increase with the lapse of time from the death of the man. We see this in the case of numbers of men of whom miracles are reported, and we find this same principles also working in the Bible.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SCIENCE

We must always remember that the Bible is a religious book. It starts off, 'In the beginning, God', and that is its key-note right through both Old and New Testaments. It is not a manual of science. It is a child of its times and no book that is found in the collection of writings making up the Old and New Testaments, ever sets itself up to be a text-book on science or to give the last word on science. The authors of the books in the Old Testament reflect the scientific knowledge of their times, and are in harmony with the lack of scientific knowledge of those who lived before God had allowed mankind to learn His secrets in

astronomy, geology, anthropology, biology and psychology. These various sciences are, as we have seen, simply ways in which man has systematized his knowledge of the ways in which God works. This knowledge, like man's knowledge of all aspects of truth, has been revealed gradually by God, in answer to man's endeavours to find out about God.

We must recognize, therefore, that we cannot reconcile numbers of things in the Bible, where writers reflect the limited scientific knowledge of their times, with the fuller scientific revelation that God has given man in subsequent times. There has been progression in all branches of knowledge of God's truth as well as in the spiritual insight of man. But the fact that a man believed that the world was created in seven days, does not in any way lessen the value of his insight that it was the work of God, and that God was the Creator. A modern man who believes in the theory of evolution, recognizes, or does so if he is religious, that this is merely a theory of *how* things were done, and that he is at one with the Old Testament writer in recognizing that however it was done, the doer, the Creator, was God. Due to the advance in scientific knowledge, we know more about God's methods of working. But both recognize that it was God Who was at work. Different ideas on method make no difference to this fundamental fact. In the same way, the fact that an Old Testament writer believed that the sun moved round the earth, whereas in these days God has shown us that the earth moves round the sun, makes no difference to the fundamental belief that earth and sun are obeying God's laws, and that God is at work in, and is directing, the world He has made. Thus there need be no stumbling block when we find that the writers in the Old Testament did not have our modern knowledge of science.

God never tells us things which we can find out for ourselves. The slow researches, which, under His guidance,

have told us so much about His work and laws, are the result of His way of working with us. His whole treatment of the human race has been an educational one. We cannot go to the Old Testament, or to the New Testament, and expect to find set down there all knowledge. God expects us to work for ourselves, and to use the powers He has given us. His revelations comes gradually to those who seek diligently. We must remember, firstly, that insight into the will of God does not depend on scientific knowledge, and may be compatible with a very primitive idea of how God works in nature. Secondly, as we have seen, even in this spiritual insight there has been progression. It is therefore not unreasonable to find that there has been progression in scientific knowledge also. In fact, this is what we would expect to find.

One does not teach small children theories of evolution or the mysteries of astronomy. One starts with children as God started with the Hebrews, namely that God created the Universe and that He directs it. Gradually this conception is filled out and enriched as the child grows, and learns more of the things of God and His world. But nothing he ever learns in science need be contrary to this fundamental idea, which is the fundamental conception of the Old Testament. But we must not try to use the Old Testament for something for which it was never intended.

### THE USE OF TEXTS

Abundant mischief had been done by the practice, of building proofs for courses of action on isolated texts. We know how slavery was supported in this way, also the cruel treatment of witches. Texts taken out of the context, away from their background, can be used to support things which may be quite contrary to the whole spirit of Jesus and of His revelation of God. War, for instance, is sometimes supported because of an isolated text about buying a sword. The futility of this practice is shown by the

completely divergent results that are reached. Each faction has its own favourite texts, and Scripture is valued largely as a source from which passages and texts here and there may be found to support a favourite view. When texts are quoted on the opposite side they are forced into agreement by bad exegesis, or ignored.

There is the additional difficulty which we have to face when using isolated texts as the basis of beliefs, that often they are passages where the MSS disagree and we have no certain means of knowing which reading is the correct one. It is axiomatic in all Bible study that we have to interpret the individual verse in the light of the whole. Only so will we avoid pitfalls. The proof-text method has fallen into disrepute today though it is still used by far too many devout Christians. The things of which we are sure are supported by stronger evidence than any one verse: To use a verse to illustrate a truth or to express a truth is a very different thing from using a verse to prove a truth. It is always a shaky building that rests on the foundation of a few phrases or verses. Most of our trouble comes from forgetting the progressive element in the Bible, and from a disposition to make it into a law. This was something from which Jesus wished to make us free. It is the spirit that gives us life. The letter kills.

## PROBLEMS OF METHOD

### *(a) Application.*

This is probably the most difficult, as it is the most important problem of our work. While one aim of the study of the Old Testament will be to gain a knowledge of it, and of the working of God in history and of His revelation to men of old, this is not the main aim. The main aim is that we and our pupils may not be hearers only, but also doers of the word. The ultimate aim of all Bible study is that it should have a practical effect on life and the per-

sonality. Now there is only one way in which this can be done. That is by action according to what has been learned. We may learn all about the teaching of a prophet, we may study the life of a hero of the faith, we may study a trait of character, but unless our study results in some definite action on our part, it will have little effect on life. We learn by doing here, just as everywhere else.

But everyone who has attempted to carry out this principle knows that, especially in day schools, it is extremely difficult to give the opportunities that are needed if the teaching is to be put into action. And the result is that all too often we rest content with giving information, carrying on academic study, having discussions, and leaving out the one essential element. Hence every teacher of the Bible, whether it be the Old Testament or the New Testament he is dealing with, must ever keep in mind that, on every possible occasion, opportunities for action according to what has been learnt must be given.

Probably the best way of solving this problem is by using the problem method of approach as has been suggested on pages 107 ff. This method has the supreme advantage that it starts with a need or problem that is felt, and that therefore the field of action is ready. It is not difficult then to relate the teaching to the problem, and easy to show how it can be put into action in the situation which is present and clamant. In the same way the project method also lends itself to action, and when Scripture teaching is made part of a project that is being carried out by the class, then it can be linked up with life and its problems, and hence can more easily result in action.

But any of the methods suggested can result in action if the teacher always keeps in mind that this must be the final stage of all that he does with his class. When planning a course of study or of discussion, the teacher must make a point of finding out ways of acting on knowledge gained and conclusions reached. I do not minimize the difficulty

of this. But it is essential for real success, and must be the final aim of all work that is done.

This is not to say that there will not be some courses undertaken for the sake of giving knowledge and inculcating an attitude, such as courses for demonstrating the principle of progressive revelation. But we must always be on our guard not to let this necessity for giving knowledge, lull us into forgetfulness and neglect of the prime necessity for giving opportunities for action on what is learnt, whenever possible.

### *(b) Memory Work.*

There is no space here to take up this subject in detail. But a few things to guide us may be noted. In the first place, children differ very considerably in the ease with which they can learn by heart. Some can learn material off by heart easily and enjoy doing so. Others find it difficult, and forcing them to do so has an unfortunate effect on their attitude to the material that they are thus forced to commit to memory. It is therefore very necessary for the teacher to know his children in this respect, as in all others, and to refrain from forcing those for whom it is a burden to learn material off by heart. This seems to me to be the first principle. Learning by heart should never be forced on children.

Secondly, it is questionable if there is much value in learning by heart material unless the child has at least some idea of the meaning. I know that this is a controversial subject. But it seems to me that material should not be learnt by heart unless the child feels the appeal and attraction of the material in question. This does not mean to say that he must understand it in detail. He may have only a very general idea of what it is about. He will not be able to put into words the emotional appeal. But it should attract him, and this it cannot do unless he have a general understanding of the meaning, or a general feeling

for the passage. If he has such a feeling, this, of course, is one way of understanding it. From this arises the necessity for grading memory work. We must be careful not to expect small children to learn by heart things which are suitable only for those who are older. For instance it is very questionable if it is right to expect children of eight or nine to learn all the ten commandments.

Thirdly, there is a danger in memory work, especially in India. The danger is that we encourage a passive and second-hand attitude to the Bible and religion. It is admitted everywhere that Indian children and students are far too prone to learn things by heart, instead of thinking for themselves, and our whole educational system in India gives far too much encouragement to this passive, imitative attitude. One of our aims in all religious education must be to help our children to learn to think for themselves. In doing this we have to watch very carefully our use of memory work, for memorizing is not thinking.

I am not trying to argue that there should be no memory work. I am simply saying that memorizing is a method which has to be used carefully, and which should not be used with everybody. If we are presenting Scripture to our children as we should be doing, then numbers of them will feel the appeal of different passages, and a mere suggestion that these passages should be memorized will be enough to lead them to do so. But the child who finds it difficult to memorize should never be made to feel that there is something wrong with him, or that he is inferior. In all likelihood, as he grows up, when it comes to thinking for himself, he will be in a better position than those who are naturally good at learning things off by heart.

In closing, let me emphasize again the point that I made early in this book. In all our study of the Old Testament, our final object is to show how it leads up to Jesus Christ. All our work must have the aim of bringing our children into a close and saving contact with Jesus. It is the

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